Draped in Shadows

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Draped in Shadows

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Summary

After the fall, Hannibal wakes up in a place familiar to him. Soon, he realizes that this place is not what it seems, and that they may not have survived after all.

While Hannibal struggles to find Will in a hell of his own making, Will tries to adjust to the sense that something isn’t quite right, despite the normality of his day to day life with Molly.

With the help of shared dreams and surprising allies, they must find their way to each other, because death is not an end, but a beginning.

A Loop

Chapter Notes

Hello! Thank you for stopping by and I hope you guys will enjoy this fic just as much as I've had fun writing it. This is completed and I will be posting every 2 weeks on Saturdays. This has been a work of passion and I'm so very happy with how it turned out. There will be one or two additional time stamps to the fic that will be outside of the main storyline and is more fluffy (Probably) so that's why this fic is in a series.

Thank you kindly to my beta readers Hannisquid and Kel for beta-reading the first 2 chapters of my fic! The rest is unbeta-ed and all remaining mistakes are mine.

This fic took me a year to write and polish up, and I want to thank the kind people on the Hannigram server who followed my progress as I struggled haha. Tanja, bless you for being so supportive when I was suffering I appreciate it. <3 Your kind words helped me finish. Thank you, my dear.

This first chapter is more of a prologue, so future chapters will be much longer. Without further ado, please enjoy the fic!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

LUNASTORIES
DRAPED IN SHADOWS
JDRAGON122

Hannibal opened his eyes.

He breathed in deep, relishing the lasting notes of bitter wood within the wine, tipping it *just* so, in a way that wafted the gentlest of scents towards his sensitive nose. He smiled, lips pressing lightly over the rim of the wine glass when he noticed Will copying his movements, ever the empath.

Will looked healthier now, without the flush of fever marring his delectable skin, hair no longer matted down by sweat and pain. It was a good look on him, and he took pride in Will's speedy recovery, his good health in part due to the fact that Hannibal had tended to him day and night, prioritizing Will's injuries over his own.

The fall had been brutal for both of them, and though Hannibal had fared better braving the rough ocean, his ascension had been halted by an unconscious Will and it was with great determination and an undying tenacity that he'd hauled the empath onto the beach along with himself. He'd breathed life back into Will's still lungs and kept him steady while he'd contacted Chiyoh back at the house on the cliff.

Hannibal had spared only a glance and a flash of pride at the piece of art the Dragon made, spread out with plucked wings and tempered fangs. It was a monument to his and Will's love, to their ardent passion and their understanding.

Now, many weeks later, they were safely sequestered away in a house near the borders of Italy, a place much smaller than his elegant home in Baltimore, but it served their purposes nicely. They'd spent their days here recovering, speaking very little as a sense of peace had fallen between them. Their relationship was mended through blood and sacrifice. There were no more secrets between them.

They could be true to one another, they could choose to *see* without consequence and fear of Will’s morality rearing its ugly head. It was everything Hannibal had ever wanted, and he was content.

Hannibal licked his lips, and watched with a steady gaze as Will’s eyes traced the path of his tongue.

“Would you say that the wounds we placed on each other, the marks we left behind, were crimes of passion?” Hannibal spoke in a measured tone, leaning back in his leather chair as he shifted his dark gaze to the waning firelight, basking in the warmth of the fireplace.

Will took a long moment to answer, long enough that Hannibal looked up. He studied Will, taking in his tense form and the white knuckled grip he had on the fragile wine glass. Hannibal’s mind darted back to memories long ago, of broken tea cups and shattered trust.

“Arguably yes.”

“Passion has been the cause for many sins over human history. Helen of Troy caused wars and the deaths of thousands through the passion she invoked in others. Yet humans would cease to exist without passion to push them towards one another and inevitably, procreation. It is, in a sense, both a nurturing yet destructive aspect of humanity,” His lips quirked into a sardonic smile, eyes narrowing as he grasped onto the thread of the conversation with sharp claws and gleaming, blood stained teeth. “Which type of passion do you assign to us, Will? Is it something that will elevate us to higher beings? Or is it an instrument in our self destruction?”

Will avoided his questions just like he avoided his eyes, stare alert yet distant as he adjusted his glasses. “You once told me that your passion for me was inconvenient. Do you feel the same now?”

It was a soft question, designed to poke and prod at Hannibal, to *see* more than he was willing to give. But what Will didn’t know was that Hannibal would give him everything, every dark, corrupted part of him if Will wanted to see it. Will didn’t understand that, he *couldn’t* understand the depths of Hannibal’s passion, and his forgiveness. Soon, he will learn, and when that day comes, Hannibal will reap the fruits of his labors and his empath will be elevated through his guidance.

“Yes,” Hannibal murmured, smiling when Will’s eyes darted over to him in surprise before quickly focusing back onto the fireplace. “Everyday I see you as you see me. My passion for you grows steadily day by day.”

“You are nourished by the sight of me,” Will muttered, a certain cadence to his words that sounded almost like he was emulating someone else’s thoughts.

“Yet I still hunger,” Hannibal confessed, breathless with want as he drank in Will’s sudden flush, this one much more pleasing as he had been the cause of it.

"Our love is inconvenient then, can't live with you, can't live without you. We'll always want to consume one other."

Hannibal sat up straighter, delighting in the fact that Will had referred to hunger in the context of both of them, not just Hannibal. He shuddered, drunk on pleasure as he reminisced on how far they'd come.

"Consumption isn't an ending, Will. It is merely a beginning, an expression of our ardent love for one another and the passion we feel. As long as we see each other, our consumption is spiritual and emotional. We will feast on our obsessions and feed it in turn." Hannibal breathed out, leaning forward, willing Will to meet his eyes. "This is all I ever wanted for us, Will."

It was an echo of words long passed. Ones that lived within their synchronized heartbeats, in the boiling of their veins and the darkness of their pain, never forgotten, only buried.

Will met his gaze then and Hannibal's breath caught on a frown. Will's face was startlingly blank, though his mouth grimaced with distaste.

"See, that's where you're wrong, Hannibal." Will stood up, pacing in front of the fireplace as he voiced his displeasure. "Truth be told, I no longer wish to see you."

Hannibal felt his fingers dig into the supple leather as his mind scrambled to piece together where he'd gone wrong. Why was Will suddenly changing his tune?

"I don't think I understand what you mean by that," Hannibal finally enunciated slowly, standing and keeping his hands palm up in a placating manner. "If you would take a seat I'm sure we could discuss this-"

Will let out a harsh bark of laughter before turning on his heel, addressing Hannibal with a cold glare. "I don't find you interesting enough to *see*." Will emphasized his words, letting Hannibal know without a doubt that this was something he'd thought for a while now, that somehow Hannibal wasn't worthy of the empath's regard. "In fact, I find myself…becoming and evolving without your guidance. When I am away from you, I become something more, something greater than you could ever mold me into."

This onslaught of words was more than disheartening to Hannibal and his reaction amounted to a set of startled blinks. With all his knowledge of Will, he had never seen this ire, this… dispassionate indifference from the man. It was worse than hate, worse than love. It was just as Will said, he truly didn't want to see Hannibal.

He was becoming, but it was not by Hannibal's design.

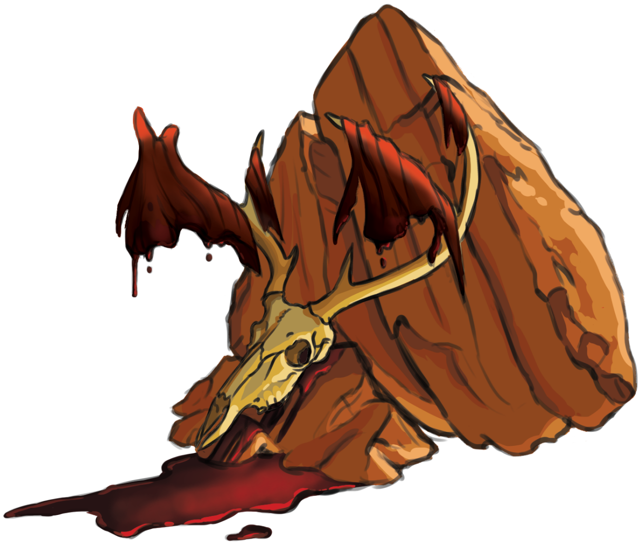
"Will-" Hannibal tried, but was refuted, a quick wave of Will's hand dismissing any words he had to say as useless.

"Goodbye, Hannibal."

He walked out then, and Hannibal couldn't help the sudden emptiness in his chest, more pronounced than before. It wasn't an all consuming pain, no, the ability to feel emotions stronger than hunger and obsession had been burnt out of him when Mischa had died. Instead it was a dull ache, one that increased as Hannibal stood there for an indeterminate amount of time.

His breathing was measured, calm. Inside, he felt the steadiness he'd nurtured for years, through the consumption of flesh of those lesser than him and the amusement derived from the games he played with desperate FBI agents, waver and rock, as if unmoored by Will's departure.

He closed his eyes and breathed in the lingering scent of Will.



Hannibal opened his eyes.

He tilted the wine glass towards himself, breathing in the bitter scent of wood barrel and tipped the glass against his waiting lips. He smiled, eyes shining with delight as Will copied his movements, ever the empath.

The fall had been difficult for both of them, but they had survived it.

Chapter End Notes

You guys, no joke but Dragon stayed up until 5 am last night to get it done in time. We took so long that skype kicked us off the call after 8 hours haha. Literally all the thanks to my artist Dragon who was both a very supportive cheerleader and my partner in crime for this fic. This is our big collaboration and all the art seen in this fic is made by her talented hands. She worked really hard on them (Seriously we've also been staying up for the past week trying to get the art done in time for the fic xD It's been a journey).

I would appreciate it greatly if you guys would check out our masterpost for the fic to give her some love. You can also find the post on Twitter. I'll be reblogging/tweeting every time a new chapter is out so if you'd like to stay updated you can follow us there. Thank you!

Dragon and I had been planning to upload the first chapter the week previous but coincidentally the Hannibal creative event #itsstillbeautiful was happening and we decided this was the perfect chance to participate. The theme of the event just so happened to match our fic! We'd like to thank the mods of the event for organizing it and giving us the opportunity to get more involved with the Hannigram community.

If you liked this fic, please do let me know this was actually my first Hannigram fic I wrote. The ones I have posted on my account are all one shots I created after this one haha. I've been waiting very patiently to post and I'm so excited to hear what you guys have to say and what your theories are. Any comments help feed me! Thank you again <3

You can find my tumblr here. Feel free to drop by and say hi! I've also decided to become more active on Twitter and it'll be 99% Hannigram/Hannibal stuff so please check me out there! I'd love to get to know some of you. I'll likely post little snippets of what I'm working on next as well.

An Echo

Chapter Notes

Hello everyone! Here is the next chapter <3 Thank you kindly to all those who have commented and taken the time to leave a kudos on this fic. It really helps me out! It also makes me feel as if I'm not just yelling into the void with my writing xD This is actually my personal favorite chapter. I just really enjoy their first encounter in the forest. :)

This chapter was beta-read by Hannisquid, Kel, and Nicks. A million thanks to all of you, and I'd like to take the time to welcome Nicks as they will be the lovely person beta-reading the rest of this fic. It will be much more polished and neat thanks to them haha. And a special thank you to Cinn for introducing Nicks to me <3

See the end of the chapter for more notes

An Echo
"Everyone finds beauty in the taboo, Will.
We're the only ones savage enough to taste it."

Will woke up with a gasp, eyes wild as he grasped at his bed sheets, slick with his sweat. His mind felt scrambled, hot and fever red, reminding him too much of his experience with encephalitis not long ago.

“Will,” A soft voice whispered, heavy with sleep and gently reassuring. It was familiar to him. “Will, hey it’s okay. You’re home in Wolf Trap. It’s 3:24 am and your name is Will Graham. I’m here with you.”

Molly.

Will turned his head, blinking the sting of sweat out of his eyes as he breathed heavily, meeting her worried gaze.

“I…” Will trailed off, groaning as he sat up and pressed a hand to his forehead, heart racing for a reason other than the nightmare he’d suffered. He pressed his other hand against the ache in his chest. “Where am I?”

“You’re in Wolf Trap-“

“No, Molly,” Will cut off, his voice harsh in the darkness of night. Nothing felt real and everything had an edge of incongruence to it, like a key not fitting in the right hole. He’d suffered enough waking dreams and nightmares to know when he didn’t belong. “*Why* am I here?”

She was silent for a long moment before she sat up, dark blonde hair falling in disarray, framing her face like a halo. “Will, you’re here because you’re my husband,” She said slowly, reaching a hand out and gently clasping his tense hand in her’s, tracing up his corded muscles before resting on his shoulder. “You’re here because this is where you live. Are you confused? Do you need me to turn on the lights?”

“No,” Will muttered, rubbing a hand at the back of his sweaty neck, tugging at his curls. The sensation jolted him out of his stupor and he gasped, memories of larger, more dangerous hands than his own doing the same to him. When they were bloodied and beautiful. “I- I was with Hannibal and…”

And now I’m here. Where am I?

Will looked around again, getting to his feet as he traced the walls and the miscellaneous items (fly fishing traps, a coin, a pencil) on his desk. It all felt so real. But he remembered distinctly the spray of arterial blood across his face, the image of Hannibal ripping the Dragon’s throat out. The feel of his body against Will’s as they held each other, pure and cleansing in a way that he’d always feared. Why had he resisted for so long? The taste of blood in his mouth, the way Hannibal had looked at him with adoration in his eyes. It had been everything he ever wanted.

Then, he’d realized that it was something he could never have. Not if he wanted to keep the people he loved safe. No, Hannibal would burn the world around them, just so Patroclus could be his, always, no one in Troy to stop them. With the last shred of good left in him, he’d pulled them both off the cliff.

And Hannibal hadn’t resisted.

“You’re not with Hannibal,” Molly soothed. “You’re safe. He’s in a cell somewhere, under lock and key just as he has been the past three years. You have nothing to fear.”

Will felt more than heard her step behind him, wrapping her thin arms around his waist, her forehead pressing warm against the hollow between his shoulder blades. She moved closer, but her warmth couldn’t chase away the gaping emptiness inside.

“We killed together,” Will murmured, eyes tearing up in despair as he wondered if it had all been a dream. He couldn’t tell if his disappointment was because it wasn’t real, or if it was because he wanted it to be. “It was beautiful,” He whispered, echoing the words, letting them settle on his skin like the darkest of confessions.

“It was just a nightmare,” Molly reassured. She pressed a kiss on the skin of his back and he shuddered. It wasn’t one of cold or fear, but revulsion. He felt dirty, letting her touch him, because he didn’t belong to her. No, he belonged to only one creature and it was one too dangerous for this world. “Come back to bed.”

Will blinked out of his thoughts, wiping at his eyes quickly before turning around and following Molly to their bed. As they lay there he stared up at the ceiling. Molly held him close, laying her head on his left shoulder as he slowly traced patterns on her arm, letting it anchor him.

Distantly, there was the thud of hooves on wooden floor boards and he closed his eyes as a huff of breath warmed the right side of his face. He didn’t dare open his eyes, but for the rest of the night, he felt the regard of a predator on him and he’d never slept better.

As the days went by, the extremely vivid dream he’d had that fateful night grew into a distant memory. The routine of his normal life muddied his thoughts and he didn’t think of the past, nor did he contemplate the future. He found madness lay on the path ahead and it was one he wasn’t overly fond of falling into again.

Hannibal held his past and his future in his blood soaked hands and he was never letting go. So Will lived the only way he knew how to, in the present, far from the grasp of the man he belonged to.

He was fixing a motor boat, his dogs panting and keeping him company as he performed a task he could do in his sleep. The sun was slowly setting, colors dulling around the edges as he worked. The monotonous work kept him focused, though he couldn’t help but feel like this was a representation of his life. Nothing but the same old actions, over and over, until he'd met Hannibal. Then, he'd felt a spark, a sudden breath of relief that maybe there was more to life than the nothingness he'd lived thus far.

And now, after Hannibal, he was back to that dreaded routine. He hated the man with a passion, as much as he ached for him. If Hannibal hadn't shown him how beautiful life could be, he wouldn't miss it now.

There was a flash of black in his peripheral vision and he stilled his movements, carefully peeking out the corner of his glasses. It gave him a clear view of the Ravenstag, standing regally within the tree line.

He turned towards it and it huffed at him before trotting deeper into the forest. Will glanced around, contemplating his next move, even when he knew he would follow regardless. Putting down his wrench, he whistled and the dogs headed back into the house. He locked up, thankful that Molly had chosen to attend a fair with Walter at the school. He didn't want her to question him. Sometimes, he didn't have an answer for his actions either.

Most days, even with Hannibal locked in a cell and miles away, he felt as if he wasn't himself. As if Hannibal had burrowed his way into Will and lived in his chest, right next to his dull beating heart and the echo of loneliness that could only be filled by his presence. It would explain some of his more inexplicable actions. Such as his decision to follow his hallucination into a forest, as it grew too dark to see.

Grabbing a flashlight by his work table, he made his way through the woods, following the sound of leaves crunching under animal weight and the call of the Ravenstag. Finally, they broke into a clearing, something that shocked Will seeing as this clearing had not been there before. He and Molly had explored these woods thoroughly and Will liked to take walks through them. He would have definitely noticed if there was a field near their house.

Standing in the center, the Ravenstag shook its body a few times, raven black feathers falling from its pelt as it let out a loud bellow before its back distorted. There was the sound of harsh bones snapping and pained pants for a few moments before the Wendigo stood where the Ravenstag had been.

It stared at him with empty eyes, though he felt a glimmer of fondness and longing from it.

"I thought we'd agreed not to meet anymore," Will spoke up in the still forest, even the wind silent, as if frightened by the creature. It walked towards him and as he watched, the dark skin glowed in the night, shedding. Antlers retreated back into its skull, until a mop of familiar aristocratic hair took its place.

"You told me that you didn't want to see me. I never promised I wouldn't come to you, Will," Hannibal replied, a quirk to his thin lips as he stepped up to Will, hand reaching out and cupping Will's stubbled cheek. "I fear we have much to discuss."

Will didn't dare breathe, lest he disrupt the moment they were having, this fragile time, before the tea cup breaks. Hannibal seemed to feel it too because despite his foreboding words, he kept silent, staring into his eyes.

Will could see him so much better now. He yearned to be closer, to see enough that he could know Hannibal's heart and soul, if the monster had one that is. He darted his tongue out, a nervous wetting of his lips that Hannibal followed with narrowed eyes. The heat that grew in Hannibal's gaze warmed Will and he couldn't help the way he leaned into Hannibal's touch.

"You said you had something to say?" Will finally broke the moment, stepping back and letting the cool night air dampen their fevered longing. He cleared his throat, eyes darting down as he tried to remind himself he was married and that wanting Hannibal, even if it was a product of his imagination, was tantamount to betrayal.

Betrayal and forgiveness was akin to the sensation of falling in love, but he never wanted to love Molly like that. No, she didn't deserve his darkness and his pain, even if it meant he could never truly be himself around her.

Hannibal's eyes sharpened, a moue of distaste ticking down the edge of his lips, as if he knew where Will's thoughts had gone. Considering Hannibal was his hallucination, he probably did know.

"I wanted to see how you were faring, after the fall."

"The fall," Will repeated slowly, raising an eyebrow as a mirthless smirk marred his face. He scrubbed a hand down his mouth, fingers catching on the stubble there. "You mean the vivid dream I had a few days ago?"

"Dreams are generally a reflection of long forgotten desires," Hannibal replied, just as cryptic as he'd been when he was Will's therapist. "Often, they are the way our mind deals with fear and urges too dark to manifest in the real world. So that begs the question, was your dream one of desire or fear?"

"Couldn't it be both?" Will shot back before he could think it through, falling into the familiar pattern of banter between him and the doctor. FBI agent and cannibalistic serial killer. Betrayer and the betrayed. "I killed us both, after murdering someone. I think it's safe to say it was a mixture of what I desired - you, dead by my hand - and what I feared - to be too taken by what I was becoming to resist participating in a macabre dance of death with you and the Dragon."

"So it seems," Hannibal smirked, a hum of thought breaking out of him as he clasped his hands behind his back, looking entirely too amused. "Yet you seem to be avoiding the most damning truth of them all."

"And what 'truth' would that be, doctor?" Will retorted, a grim smile on his face as he met Hannibal's blood red eyes. "I've found that often, the truth you drag out of me isn't one of my own design, but rather one molded and placed there by you. A truth that you nurtured and claimed, kicking and screaming into the light, so that I could become a better companion to you."

"Still, you drink from my fountain of truth all the same, your mind finding release in the way I coax dark desires and even darker actions from you. Tell me, is it easier on your deteriorating conscience to blame every breach in conduct on me?” Hannibal stepped closer, a predator hunting its prey, with gleaming claws and hunger for more.

Will clenched his jaw, refusing to back down. “If I’d never met you I wouldn’t be here now, questioning my sanity and my morality.”

Finally, Hannibal was close enough to lean in, slowly, as if trying not to spook Will. His prey willingly stepping into his claws. “Yes, and you are all the more beautiful because of it.”

Will flushed, swallowing hard and clenching his eyes shut as the ghost of Hannibal’s breath tickled over the sensitive skin of his lips. He could almost taste the blood that seemed to soak every inch of Hannibal, the blood of his victims and those he’d deemed less worthy. He wondered, if he tried hard enough, would he be able to taste his own blood on Hannibal’s lips? “Beautiful in your eyes, monstrous by normal standards.”

“Everyone finds beauty in the taboo, Will. We’re the only ones savage enough to taste it.” There was a pause, as Hannibal let his words sink in. Will opened his eyes, meeting the white gaze of the Wendigo. “But that is not why I am here today.”

It leaned back, the crown of antlers stretching towards the night sky, the full moon bracketed by deadly sharp bone. “You seek the truth and you see it, yet you do not *feel* it.”

Will let out a frustrated sound, crossing his arms to hold in what little warmth he still had. “What is it you want me to feel?”

“Me,” The Wendigo answered. Thin, emancipated arms reached out and dark fingers held onto Will’s hand. It raised Will’s shivering fingers until they rested on the Wendigo’s chest. There was no heartbeat. The skin was tough, yet soft. It startled Will and he struggled to hold still, breath coming out in a pant as his eyes widened in disbelief. He’d never been able to touch his hallucinations before. Oh god, was he actually going insane?

It pressed closer to him, forcing him to back up until he hit the trunk of a tree with a solid *thunk*. His free hand pressed against the rough bark, trying to balance himself as he felt dizzy with panic. It was a bizarre dichotomy of sensations on his hands, one soft and tough, one rough and cold.

“How?” Will breathed out, daring to look up into the Wendigo’s eyes, shrinking back as it leaned in and surrounded him with its antlers.

“Think, Will,” It hissed out, mouth opening into sharp pointed fangs. “If I feel real to you and this world feels real to you…”

“Then nothing is real,” Will let the words out in a shocked gasp, tears pricking his eyes as he tried to wrap his mind around it. He bared his teeth in a snarl, shaking his head as he tried to push away his fears. He’d gone down this road before, doubting his own sanity and driving himself insane with uncertainty. “I-I don’t, then what is this? Where am I?”

The Wendigo opened its mouth in a wide unhinged gape and for one heart-pounding moment Will wasn’t sure if it meant to answer him or devour him. He would never know because in the next second, it whipped its head up, a snarl on its face before it backed away from him. With one last look at Will, it blended into the shadows of the trees and disappeared.

“-ere are you! Will!” The voice broke him out of the shaken daze he’d fallen into and he wet his dry lips with a hot swipe of his tongue before he answered the call.

“Over here!”

They were standing above the body of Randall Tier and Hannibal couldn’t help the triumph he felt, the warm pride as his eyes took in the violent markings on Randall’s face.

“You’ve been busy, I see,” Hannibal commented, pulling off his leather gloves and placing them into his coat pocket. He turned his gaze to Will, taking in how still he was, how controlled and comfortable. He looked exquisite and Hannibal felt saliva pool in the back of his mouth, teeth itching with the urge to sink into his stubbled jaw line and vulnerable neck. Once he’d tasted Will, gorged on the ripe forbidden fruit, there would be no going back.

Hannibal mused, a little smirk on his lips, that it was perhaps too late for him. He’d tasted Will many times over, both his presence and his mind a nourishment like no other.

“Happy?” Will asked, voice carefully blank as he moved around the table to stand before Hannibal. “Of course you are. You led me down this path, leaving me bread crumbs, but they didn’t lead out of the witch’s forest, no. They led me straight into her den.”

Hannibal stepped closer, eyes bright with hunger as he cupped Will’s face, brushing a thumb across his chapped lips. His other hand reached for Will’s bruised hand, lifting it until he could press a kiss to the knuckles, surreptitiously licking up the traces of blood. Hannibal shuddered, a small moan breaking out of him as the pure taste of Will spread across his sensitive taste buds. He barely refrained from biting down, taking more than was offered.

Will, for his part, didn’t react except to watch Hannibal’s motions with a grim set to his mouth.

“Tell me Will, when you killed Randall, did you imagine it was me?” Hannibal waited with bated breath, a smile playing across his lips. He already knew the answer and his clever boy had never disappointed him yet.

“It was…intimate,” Will answered, after a long moment. Then, his gaze grew distant, expression closed off from Hannibal. Hannibal narrowed his eyes in response, irritated. Will was his in every way, he wasn’t allowed to hide from him, not anymore. Will’s eyes slowly opened and drifted up to meet his, an emotion behind them that Hannibal couldn’t decipher. It took a moment for him to realize he didn’t understand it because he’d never seen Will look at him like that before.

It was a cool gaze of disinterest. Not the kind that Will had struggled to maintain, as he tried to convince Hannibal and himself that he didn’t care for Hannibal. No, this was true apathy.

“It was intimate,” Will repeated, voice stronger this time as he stepped away from Hannibal’s arms, leaving him shivering with a sinking feeling of dread. “That was precisely the moment I realized that when I imagine intimacy, it does not wear your face.”

“Will,” Hannibal’s voice was a whisper, the dark part of him recoiling in defensive anger. It hurt, in a way he didn’t know he could still feel. He had thought that they were closer now, despite or because of the growing dark bond they shared.

“Hannibal,” Will responded cooly, letting out a disappointed sigh. “I’ve seen what you have to offer me,” Will waved his hand at Randall dismissively, making light of Hannibal’s gift to him. The killer he’d sent both as a way to repay Will for Matthew Brown, but also as a way for him to further Will’s elevation. “And I have to say I’m not impressed.”

Hannibal blinked, mouth thinning as he realized there was little he could do to salvage this. Will wasn’t lying, he truly didn’t feel what Hannibal felt.

“I think that we should go our separate ways,” Will sighed as he traced a hand slowly across the dining room table, refusing to meet Hannibal’s eyes. “You don’t have anything more to offer me and our relationship has reached its natural ending point.”

“I see,” Hannibal said carefully, his hand slipping into his coat pocket as he thumbed the scalpel he had hidden there. “That’s a pity.”

Will wasn’t facing him, still turned slightly away to stare down at Randall with indifference. Hannibal stepped forward and hugged him from behind, breathing in his scent one last time, nose pressed against his unruly curls as he dragged the scalpel across Will’s neck. Will choked, hands flying up to grab Hannibal’s hand but the spurts of blood made it hard for him to hold onto Hannibal, his fingers unable to find purchase on the now warm, slippery skin.

“You are mine,” Hannibal choked out, feeling his eyes tear up as he held Will close, holding him as his body spasmed in pain. “But if you are to leave me, then I’d rather it be by my hand.”

Will’s pained gurgles slowly petered out until there was nothing but the drip drop of blood on wooden floorboards, and Hannibal’s harsh breathing, the gaping emptiness in his chest fighting for his attention yet again. Usually Will's presence helped kept the hunger and loneliness at bay but now…

"Oh my sweet boy," Hannibal murmured, lowering them until he could cradle Will against him, pressing his face to Hannibal's neck. Instead of the familiar puff of warm breath against his skin, there was only silence. Hannibal closed his eyes, breathing in the scent of Will, muted by the blood. After a long, drawn out moment, Hannibal settled on the notion that the only way left to show his love would be to consume him.

Hannibal laid Will carefully on the floor. He brushed his errant curls back, the blood on his hands transferring to the hair there. He stood up, mind carefully blank as he moved to his basement to grab the tools he would need. The meat would spoil soon, and he couldn't let Will die like that, not without tasting him one last time.

When he grabbed his bag, his hands shook and Hannibal took a moment to close his eyes, to truly feel the loss of the only man who had ever understood him.

Distantly, he wondered if living like he had thus far was even plausible without the presence of Will beside him. Now, he would have the rest of his life to figure it out, alone and with no one to see him.

Hannibal shuddered, dreading the concept of existence, of living in a world without Will. A lifetime of starvation without Will to nourish him.

He shook himself out of his melancholy and headed back upstairs. There was work to do.

Will opened his eyes slowly, staring at the shifting shadows on the ceiling as the morning light streamed through the bedroom window.

Another dreamless night.

Besides that first night where he'd felt off kilter and out of place, he hadn't dreamed a single thing. No nightmares, nothing at all. He knew he should be grateful, at least he wasn't waking Molly up with his sleepwalking and screams, but it felt unreal to him.

His nightmares had followed him for years, from his subconscious to the world of the living. Faced with their absence he only felt bereft, as if he didn't know who he was without his shadows burdening him. Every morning, he would lay there and stare at the ceiling, replaying the first and only dream he could remember in recent time.

Hannibal, drenched in blood. Hannibal, ripping the Dragon's throat out with his teeth, beautiful in his savagery. And finally, the way they'd held each other before the fall.

Will pressed a hand against his aching heart. Sometimes, he still heard Hannibal's steady heartbeat in his ears, the way it had sang in victory as Will had laid his blood soaked head against a sturdy chest. It repeated in his mind's eye, over and over until he couldn't tell what was more real, the dream or his current waking hours.

Will closed his eyes when Molly stirred. He contemplated greeting her but realized he didn't have the strength to deal with her right now. He breathed deeply, faking sleep as she sat up and pressed a kiss to his forehead. He ached in a different way when she did that, always a sense of misplaced guilt, as if *this* should be what he wanted. A quiet life with a wife and kid, and not the memory of knives sinking into flesh. He struggled not to flinch away from her touch, and she stepped out of the bedroom to get ready for the day, unaware of his conflicted mind.

He heard her go wake up Walter, and Will wondered yet again whether or not he should break it off with her. It wasn't fair to Walter and Molly, staying together as one big happy family when Will's heart wasn't in it.

Will heaved out a sigh, resting an arm across his closed eyes, pressing it against himself until he saw black spots burst behind his eyelids. He didn't know where this sudden unsettled feeling came from. He'd been with Molly for three years now and they hadn't encountered any issues. They rarely argued and got along well enough. Hannibal had always been a shadow in their lives, and Will had accepted that because he knew he could never truly be free of Hannibal's presence. They'd lived with it and adapted.

He'd managed for three years, yet suddenly Molly was no longer enough. It was as if he had tasted what he truly wanted, like the monster inside him had caught the scent, and it was hungry for more. His mind flashed back to the way the Dragon's blood had looked black in the moonlight, the whisper of *this is all I ever wanted for you, Will* falling from bloodied fangs, and Will shuddered. Ignoring his arousal, he sat up, ran a hand down his face, and grimly ran through today's itinerary in his mind.

Another long day of lecturing and then fixing his motor.

Will pulled his hand away from his face and stared down at it, turning it and tracing the calluses on his palm. He traced up his arm, where Hannibal had gripped him tight and pulled him up, elevating him to his equal as they stared at each other with matching ferocity, the high of the kill creating a moment tinged with purity. For the first time, they truly saw each other.

And it was beautiful.

Shaking his head with a grimace of pain, Will sighed. There was no point lingering on vivid dreams, it wasn't real anyways.

The Wendigo's voice echoed in his head then, sounding suspiciously like Hannibal as it spoke.

"If I feel real to you, and this world feels real to you…"

Will frowned as he ignored the errant thought, grabbing his clothes as he went. This was ridiculous, he wasn't going to listen to a hallucination, no matter how much it made sense. Will paused, frown deepening when he realized he was actually entertaining what the Wendigo had suggested. No, what the Wendigo had said didn't make sense at all. He was trying to convince himself of something that wasn't real. After all, the Wendigo had implied that his entire world wasn't real and if that was true, what then? The alternative was too frightening to consider.

He could be in a coma and this was his mind creating a safe space for him to rest as he recovered. He doubted that though, reports from coma patients were rarely this clear.

There were other options too, but those were almost fanatical in nature. His mind made jumps, as it often did when under stress.

When was the last time he'd met Jack, Walter, or anyone else besides Molly? Actually, when was the last time he taught a lecture?

It was with some degree of shock that Will realized he couldn't remember. There was nothing, just blurs and vague impressions of students and suddenly he was at home, working on the motor engine and waiting for Molly to come back. Was he losing time again?

Will sat down on the bed, hands fisted tightly in the plaid shirt in his grasp as he stared at the floor.

"My name is Will Graham," Will whispered, licking his dry lips as his voice croaked. "The time is 7:18 am and I'm in…"

Will paused, hesitant. "I'm in Wolf Trap, Virginia."

Was he though? Was he really in Wolf Trap?

He stepped closer to the bedroom window, staring out at the vast expanse of forest, as far as the eye could see. There was nothing out of place, and everything was disturbingly still. Too still, almost unnatural.

He felt a huff of breath on his hand, hanging limply by his side, shirt on the ground and long forgotten. The Ravenstag nosed at his hand, and he pressed weakly back, leaning against it with a shiver of dread.

Where was he, if not in Wolf Trap, Virginia?

Chapter End Notes

Well, I hope that was enjoyable! If it was, please do let me know. It's my first time posting a consistent multi-chapter fic so I'm trying my best to learn the ropes haha. I'd love to hear what you all think! Comments and feedback are food to a writer's soul ^-^ I have been waiting with bated breath to post this and hear your thoughts on it, and it really keeps me going!

Please also appreciate the lovely graphics/art my fandom bestie Dragon made, you can find the post to reblog it here on tumblr or retweet it here on Twitter. As always, I am floored by her talent.

You can find my tumblr here. Feel free to drop by and say hi! I'm also active on Twitter and it'll be 99% Hannigram/Hannibal stuff so please check me out there! I'd love to get to know some of you. I'll likely post little snippets of what I'm working on next as well.

A Struggle

Chapter Notes

Chapter 3 is now here! Will our two favorite murder husbands figure it out? Only time will tell.

This chapter was beta read by the lovely Nicks! Thank you my friend <3 I always appreciate the help!

And of course, the awesome graphic is by Dragon. I'll link to the post for it at the end notes.

Without further ado please enjoy!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

A Struggle
"And what am I becoming?"
"Beautiful."

Hannibal sat, sketching quietly in his cell. He gave the impression of intense focus, eyes drawn in by the subtle arch of familiar curls, the sneer of disdain on sensible lips.

“Mail,” The voice of the warden droned out, and Hannibal looked up, staring past the thick pane of glass to give a polite nod to the stately woman. She didn’t give him the satisfaction of a reaction, instead grabbing the few pieces of mail he had, all of them noticeably open, and sliding them into the tray.

He stood, waiting until she stepped back before coming close enough to grab the pieces of paper. The warden left not soon after, after making sure he wasn't going to cause trouble. He sat at his desk, rifling through the papers, searching for familiar handwriting, or perhaps a coded message in one of the letters. He read each of them carefully, dismissing most requesting an interview with him (mostly psychiatrists unworthy of his attention), and one letter from Bedelia.

He opened that last one with deft fingers, eager to see what she had to say. It was always a source of amusement to him, knowing that his prey was so irrevocably tied to him, unable to resist communication even when he was contained within a cell. His influence wasn't as far-reaching as he had hoped, but it seemed the impact he'd made still lingered in the outside world. It satisfied him, leaving him smug.

Now, if only Will had the decency to come see him. Hannibal knew it was only a matter of time before he wouldn't be able to resist.

Opening the letter, his eyes skimmed over the elegant scripture, the words as always a taunt that left him more amused than irritated. Bedelia knew she was living on borrowed time, that sooner or later Hannibal would harvest the feast he had so meticulously nurtured when they were in Florence together. Her cutting words were a way of regaining control of her life, a futile attempt.

Finishing the letter, his smirk slowly fell as he reread the last few sentences, the darkness he kept a careful hold on threatening to burst out.

It will please you to know, Doctor Lecter, that your favorite patient has found a new paramour. She is a lovely woman, much more suitable for a man of his standing.

She has a son from a previous marriage, and Will was more than happy to offer himself up as the father figure in the young boy's life. They married a few days prior, their joy palpable even from a distance.

It seems Will has moved on, leaving you for his new family, one not of your making. I wonder, as the days grow longer and the years pass by, will he give a passing thought to the monster he'd left behind? Do you believe him, with his endless empathy, will feel your hungered longing from miles away?

Let's hope he does not. Normality suits him, after all.

Bedelia Du Maurier

Hannibal bared his teeth, a snarl on his lips as his hand creased the thick letter paper. He smoothed his expression immediately after, patching up the cracks in his perfected human mask with shaking fingers and roiling anger.

Will wasn't allowed to move on without him by his side. Normality? Hannibal scoffed, folding the letter and placing it back inside the envelope. His mind rebelled against the thought, of Will reduced to a banal lifestyle, living out the rest of his life never knowing his full potential.

This was just a small snag in his overarching web of plans. It was unlikely Will would resign himself to a life so dull, not after what Hannibal has shown him. Hannibal was a patient man, and he'd already spent quite some time in this cell. It was no hardship then, to wait for Will to come to him. And he was certain Will would eventually give in.

Mind settled, he shuffled the letters into a nice pile and placed it in his drawer with the rest. He turned back to his sketch, fingers tracing over Will's fiery eyes and stubbled cheeks with a gentle touch. Hannibal's eyes softened, a smile on his lips as he imagined their reunion. It would be a meeting like no other, one borne of passion and an intensity unfettered by moral obligations. He hungered for their destined reunion, but he knew that it would be all the more delicious after a long wait to foster a healthy appetite.

All he had now was patience, and an unwavering certainty that Will would come for him.

The years passed, as Bedelia said it would, with an inching pace that scraped at his nerves. Two years turned into five, and five years turned into ten. His physical features, which he'd taken great pride in cultivating, started to deteriorate, his many years in a cell causing him to lose the luster he'd once had. Captivity for a beast such as himself was unseemly, and it showed in his slow decline in health, and the ever present pang of hunger that he'd kept at bay with quiet reassurances and a slowly fading faith.

As he lay on his cot, contemplating the events that had led to his willing surrender into confinement, his mind never wavered from the image of Will. Will, bloodied and bandaged on his bed as he'd told Hannibal he didn't want to know where he was. That he no longer wanted to see him.

For the first time in nearly fifteen years, Hannibal wondered if perhaps there had been some truth in those words. That Will truly wasn't coming for him and he had wasted away in a cell for the sake of a man who'd moved on. Will felt so distant now, and the correspondence from Bedelia chipped at his resolve. Will was happy, she reported all too maliciously. Will was having a child soon with his wife, another child to take his attention away from Hannibal.

It was with a growing ache that Hannibal realized he no longer remembered the exact color of Will's eyes, with their many nuances and tendency to flare with intelligence. Hannibal wondered if Will had grown out his curls, maybe he had a beard now, laced with silver hairs and befitting his rugged yet beautiful features.

He closed his eyes, and imagined a world where Will had helped him escape from this cell. A life where they bathed in blood together, and playfully led the world in a useless game of cat and mouse that only they knew the rules of, and one they would always win.

He was pulled back into his harsh reality by a distant metallic clang, knowing without looking that it was his mail. It was the only thing that changed in his now monotonous life. Will wasn't coming for him, and it was that thought that finally left a crack so deep on his mask of polite civility that he wasn't sure if even kintsugi would be able to fix him. No amount of gold could patch up the cracks on his teacup, now shattered and missing pieces that Will held in his hands.

Hannibal allowed himself a moment of grief, a tear escaping the corner of his eyes, now wrinkled with age. It escaped and flowed across his skin to settle against his grey hair.

He hungered, now more than ever, but it was with a slow resignation that he realized this time, there would be no Will to whet his appetite.

He was truly alone.

Will stared down at his dirty hands, wondering if he really wanted to spend another day working on the motor engine. His sense of time and space had become distorted, and he could no longer tell what day it was. It was disconcerting to realize that he had no real measurement of time, as if he'd been stuck, working on this motor engine for months on end without realizing it. It oddly felt like when he had encephalitis and was constantly in a state of confusion, half mad.

His mind was clear now, but his fear still lingered, and he wondered again why he was here or what he was even doing. Will closed his eyes and imagined the solid strength of the Ravenstag behind him. When he opened his eyes, it was to familiar dark eyes staring back at him, between a rack of deadly antlers.

“Hello,” Will whispered, reaching a hand out to pet the Ravenstag's snout, marveling at the fact that he could now apparently touch his hallucinations. “I think it's time we went for a walk.”

Will grabbed the wash cloth nearby and wiped his hands before walking off the yard and towards the woods. His dogs whined in confusion, but with a quick whistle, they settled, eyes following him as he kept walking without hesitation. Will was determined to figure out what was going on. He had a theory, but he had to test it first.

He walked, and walked for what felt like hours, but the sun never moved in its position. The only way he could tell the time was through his sweat covered body and the weariness in every limb. He wasn't exactly the most fit person but he wasn't out of shape either. It usually took him a good two to three hours of walking before he felt the strain.

The fact that the sun hadn't moved despite the time passing by, was truly unnerving.

"This isn't looking good," Will murmured, smiling wanly at the huff of agreement from the stag. "It seems that wherever we are, we're stuck somehow."

It was another hour of walking (or what he thought was an hour, as there was no true way to know) before Will gave in to his exhaustion and sat down on the grassy ground, leaning against a tree. In his haste to sit down, he scraped his elbows against the stiff bark of the tree, and let out an annoyed grunt when he saw the way blood welled up from the scrapes. The Ravenstag shot him an amused look but settled down next to him, curling its body next to Will and settling its large head in his lap. Will chuckled tiredly, rubbing a hand through his sweaty face and grimacing at the grime he'd accumulated.

"We'll need to take a shower when we get back," Will muttered, as he laid a hand near the Ravenstag's snout, taking comfort from the subtle puffs of breath he felt across his skin. It licked his hand in agreement and he scrunched his face, letting out a half-hearted word of protest that the Ravenstag studiously ignored with a certain air of regal disdain. It was obviously going to do whatever it wanted, and Will wondered idly if it would change into Hannibal soon.

He wanted to see the man again, even if it was just a very strong hallucination. It was a need, an aching hunger that wouldn't be sated unless he could greedily take in the sight of Hannibal.

As if summoned by his thoughts, the weight in his lap changed. Will slowly opened his eyes from where he'd unwittingly laid his head back against the tree trunk and closed them. He looked down, not surprised at the sight of Hannibal staring up at him, his hair strewn across Will's lap and framing his face like a halo. Will let out a burst of laughter at that thought, carding his hand through those thin, gold strands.

"Hello, Doctor Lecter."

"Hello, Will," Hannibal replied, eyes half-lidded in pleasure from Will's ministrations. He leaned into the touch and Will obliged, petting him like he would a particularly dangerous predator. Because that was what Hannibal was. Despite his current docile form, Will hadn't forgotten that at the flip of a switch, Hannibal could snap his neck.

"That's rather rude, don't you think?" Hannibal commented, pulling Will from his thoughts. "I wouldn't just snap your neck," Hannibal sniffed, a smile playing across his lips and eyes closing as if imagining an entirely different scenario. "I would cherish every moment. I would use my hands to caress you, keep you still even as you struggle. You would look at me with benediction in your eyes, and I would kiss each eyelash, feel every last breath from your lips."

Hannibal opened his eyes, the look startlingly heated as his red gaze bore into Will's. "I would hold you close as the life drained from your body," Hannibal lifted a hand, and placed it around Will's neck in an echo of the fantasy that passed through breathless lips. "Then, you would be mine forever."

Will ignored the way pleasure infused him at the thought of Hannibal killing him so intimately. It was dark, and all sorts of wrong that it made him feel affectionate, hearing Hannibal describe what was obviously a well-visited fantasy to him.

"That's rather obsessively creepy, don't you think, Doctor Lecter?"

"Are you psychoanalyzing me, Will?" Hannibal asked, a smirk growing on his face as the corners of his eyes crinkled in amusement. "I suppose turnabout is fair play, though I will have to request you refrain from calling my love 'creepy'."

Will's hand stilled from where it was petting Hannibal's hair, pressing a few of the strands between his thumb and forefinger. It felt wondrously real, but he knew for a fact this was all just in his head. And what did it say about him that his mind conjured up a Hannibal that described how he would like to kill him, then proclaim that as an expression of love?

"Perhaps the time for psychoanalysis is over," Will mused, tracing Hannibal's distinguished features, his thumb lingering on Hannibal's lips. He pressed in, marveling at the fact that Hannibal allowed him this transgression. He let his thumb rest against Hannibal's teeth, pushing against the sharp point of one of his fangs. It made him shudder, remembering the way those deadly teeth had ripped out the Dragon's throat with savage grace and power. "If I can't escape your analyzing even within my own head, then there really is nowhere for me to go."

"Where ever you go, I will always be by your side. We are conjoined now, neither of us can survive separation," Hannibal nibbled lightly on Will's thumb, teasing with a swipe of his tongue. "Tell me Will, have you found the answer you seek yet?"

Will bit back his groan at the feel of Hannibal's mouth on his skin. He pulled his hand back rather reluctantly, moving it to cup Hannibal's face instead. "No, but I think I'm getting there."

"Clever boy," Hannibal replied, a spark of something dark behind his eyes. "And when you find out the truth?"

"If I am truly confined as I believe I am," Will spoke slowly, allowing Hannibal to see the way his mind worked, planning and discarding different theories. "Then we will bathe in their blood and sate our hunger with the sound of their screams."

It was Hannibal's turn to give a full body shudder at Will's words, his smile growing dangerously hungry. He pulled Will down towards him with a hand at the back of his neck. Will felt the excited puffs of breath against his lips, and he willingly let Hannibal maneuver him until he could hover his lips over Will's.

"You never cease to surprise me Will. Every time I think I can anticipate your next move, you always show me another facet of your becoming," Hannibal's words were whispered against Will's skin, and Will felt the way his lips quivered, sensitive to Hannibal's warm breath.

"And what am I becoming?"

"*Beautiful.*"

Will shivered in anticipation, eyes sliding shut as Hannibal crossed that last centimeter of space between their lips. He waited with bated breath, but the touch he craved for never came.

He opened his eyes and stared up at the ceiling of his room. His mind instantly sharpened, falling out of the comfortable haze and feeling of belonging he'd had with Hannibal. He sat up abruptly, more than a little disoriented.

"What's wrong?" Molly turned towards him, and Will recoiled, his breath coming out in panicked puffs.

"I was…" He trailed off, running a shaky hand through his curls. He quickly pulled them back in front of him, staring at his hands. They were clean, and without the forest grime coating it. He was wearing nothing but his boxers, and he didn't remember changing clothes or even returning to the house. One minute he was with Hannibal, the next he was in bed. His lips still tingled with anticipation, and his neck felt the tightening of a familiar broad hand, cutting off his breathing. Was he truly going insane? "It's nothing."

"Will…" Molly reached for him, clearly concerned, but he brushed it off, getting out of bed and tugging on a pair of sweatpants with shaking hands.

"It's nothing, go back to sleep," He spoke up, voice as gentle as he could make it. "I just need to get some water that's all."

Ignoring her protests, he stepped into the kitchen. Grabbing a glass from the drawer, he opened the faucet and watched the way the water filled his cup with a distant gaze. He felt eyes on him and he looked up sharply, staring out the window to meet the eyes of the Wendigo. It stood at the treeline, far enough that he could almost blend into the shadows if Will wasn't so attuned to his presence. Instead of standing listlessly, hands at its side as it was prone to do when watching Will, it was resting one black hand against a tree trunk, an inscrutable look on its face.

Will stared back, crossing his arms and biting his bottom lip in thought as he took in the Wendigo's posture. It was a small difference but it was enough to make him wary. There was something about the way it curled its fingers into the rough bark, that pressed at the edge of his mind.

Picking idly at the scabs on his elbow, he finally looked away and picked up the cup, tilting his head back to take a long gulp.

Scabs?

Will's reaction was delayed, and he only distantly heard the sound of glass shattering on wood, his gaze focused on his elbow. It was scabbed over, because he had scraped it against the tree bark when he'd gone into the woods…

Slowly but surely, his reality was cracking, and it was with a growing sense of anticipation that he realized he was already seeing the missing continuity. Whatever was happening, wherever he was, it had missed this one detail.

He looked back up, Hannibal now standing in the place of the Wendigo. Will met Hannibal's blood red gaze with a steady surety, more clear-headed than he'd felt in a long time. The man smiled at him, clearly satisfied that his message had gotten through to Will, before stepping back and letting the darkness take him.

"Will?"

Molly's alarmed voice broke him out of his sharp focus, and he schooled his mask into one of dazed confusion. "Sorry, I must be more tired than I realized…"

He let her fuss over him, keeping a keen eye on her motions and realizing with no small amount of anger that she was likely not real too. He was stuck in a place designed to tame the beast inside him, to quell the violence he craved daily.

He knew there had to be a reason he was here, but whatever it was, he didn't care. They had tried to contain him, but what they hadn't anticipated was that the beast living in his breast was one that he'd tried to cage before and had failed. He'd given in, and now there was no going back. The docile nature of this reality was unbecoming for his new self, and it was becoming increasingly clear to him that something had changed after the fall off the cliff.

Wherever he was, he was no longer in Wolf Trap, Virginia. If he was being truthful, he wasn't even sure if he was on the earthly plane anymore. Will pressed his lips together in a thin line, mind racing as he lay in bed and stayed as still as he could to feign sleep.

It didn't matter. In the end, he would find his way to Hannibal, whether it be by his own hand or by Hannibal's design. Nothing could keep them apart from each other for long, that he was sure of.

An echo of words sounded in his head, and he let sleep take him for real this time, a smile on his lips.

Clever boy.

“How would killing me make you feel?”

Will was trembling, a wild look in his eyes that Hannibal wanted to bottle up and keep for himself. The mongoose by his side for when the snakes slither by.

“Righteous,” Will whispered, voice shaking with emotion as he held the gun in his hands. Hannibal’s eyes lingered on the way his arms stretched as he pointed the gun towards him, he traced the much longer curls around Will’s exhausted face. It seems that his brief stint in the custody of the FBI had done very little to settle his mind. Despite the lack of encephalitis, Will looked fevered.

“Guns…” Hannibal trailed off, closing the refrigerator door carefully as he stepped closer to Will, intoxicated by his proximity after so long seeing him behind bars. “They lack intimacy.”

Will paused, his hands steady as he cocked his head to the side, his gaze sharpening in understanding. “You want us to be intimate.”

Hannibal didn’t respond, his lips quirking up one side. He flicked his tongue out, reminiscent of the way a snake would slither close and taste the air, hunting for their prey. Will’s eyes tracked the movement and he swallowed before placing the gun down on the kitchen counter.

“Then intimacy, you shall have.”

That was the only warning Hannibal received before Will threw himself forwards, using the forceful shove of a shoulder to slam Hannibal against the hard metal refrigerator behind him. Hannibal let out a grunt, landing on the balls of his feet and pressing back just enough to lessen the impact, instinct taking over. He grappled with Will, holding onto him tightly as he tripped the man with one foot. They went down hard, Will beneath him as he slammed them into the tiled floor. He sat up, pressing Will down with one hand on his chest as he used his body weight to hold down Will’s hips, straddling the man’s body.

Will may have anger and righteous anger on his side, but he hadn't exactly been fed well while imprisoned. Hannibal also had years of hunting and subduing his prey on his side. He soon had the upper hand, sliding his fingers almost lovingly into long curls and gripping tight, slamming Will's head once, twice into the floor.

He stopped when Will groaned, dazed. There was blood pooling beneath Hannibal's fingers, leaving the hair sticky and warm. He felt a hunger grow in him, the part that wanted to feast and take every piece of Will inside of him, until they became one. Not Will and Hannibal but rather WillandHannibal, together in every way that mattered.

"Hannibal…" Will's voice was weak, and Hannibal focused on that sound, the way his prey was baring his weakness making Hannibal want to sink his teeth in and never let go. He was distracted from his thoughts when Will reached a hand up. He intercepted it before it could touch him, his grip on Will's wrist tightening to the point of pain. "Please…"

Hannibal blinked down at him, the haze of bloodlust dissipating as he realized Will wasn't trying to hurt him anymore. He hesitated for a moment before letting go, curious to see what Will wanted. He was stunned when Will cupped his cheek, the touch almost reverent, a certain tenderness to it that he didn't know he'd been craving until Will gave it to him.

Will bucked up against him, and at first Hannibal thought he was trying to escape, but that thought soon fled his mind when their erections brushed together, and a groan of pleasure fell from Will's lips. It wasn't uncommon for them to grow hard under the conditions they'd been in, adrenaline rushing and blood pumping. Still, Hannibal couldn't help the way he reacted, teeth bared and uncertain. This was everything he'd ever wanted, but to have Will give it to him so suddenly and in such circumstances threw him off. He didn't know how to react except to grind down, relishing in the whine that Will couldn't hold back behind gritted teeth.

Soon they built up a rhythm, and though Hannibal was above such things, his civil mask as much a part of him as the monster within him was, he couldn't deny that Will brought out his baser urges. If that was rutting against each other, bloodied and frantic, then it was something he welcomed, as long as it was something Will gave him.

Will grasped his hips, thrusting up against him and grinding in a way that had stars burst behind his closed eyes. It was a brief moment of distraction, a second where his mouth dropped open in pleasure, a moan breaking out, when suddenly Hannibal was on his back. He bucked up, desperately chasing his pleasure, but stilled at the hand on his throat holding him down.

He opened his eyes, slightly offended that Will had successfully seduced him to have the upper hand. Will for his part only looked slightly flushed, a majority of his wanton writhing was obviously an act. Now, his calm was only broken by his harsh breathing, the triumph in his gaze unmistakeable.

Will stood up, and before Hannibal could bring him back down, and make sure he stayed down this time, Will lifted a foot up and slammed it hard into Hannibal's shoulder. He let out a muffled grunt, a barely bitten off howl of pain as he felt his arm dislocate and what was likely a fracture as well. Before he could recover, Will slammed his foot against Hannibal's ribs, and he heard a distinct snap as one or two of the bones broke. Hannibal gasped for breath, wrapping the fingers of his good hand around Will's ankles, nails digging into the bone.

"Will…" Hannibal choked out, a laugh building in his throat as he admired the cruel satisfaction in Will's eyes, the way he looked down at him with a darkness that made him ache with want. The shadows framed his face like a dark halo, his beautiful Will, a fallen angel. "You surprise me yet again."

Will stared down at him, eerily silent as he seemed to be contemplating his next move. "I wanted to kill you," Will spoke with a voice barely above a whisper, his words hoarse with tension. "I wanted to feel your life drain from your body, and I wanted to do it with my hands."

Hannibal shuddered, arousal coursing through him at the thought. If he was to be killed, he wanted it to be Will. To die by the man's hands would give their relationship a certain intimacy that it didn't have before. It would tie them together irrevocably, forever. His blood would stain Will's hands, and his death would be imprinted in Will's mind. Will would never be free of him, and that thought appealed to him more than he could put into words.

"Then do it," Hannibal grit out, licking his lips as he stared up at Will beneath his lashes, the look seductive and the glee on his face unmistakeable. "Take me."

Will seemed to think about it for a moment longer before pressing his foot hard against Hannibal's broken ribs. His breath wheezed out of him, and he clenched his eyes shut at the bursts of pain. When he opened them again, he froze, the barrel of a gun within his line of sight.

"You wish for us to be intimate," Will looked blank then, no passion behind his eyes. He looked at Hannibal like he was just another body, one unworthy of him. "But intimacy is freely given, and something you have not earned. You think I see you for what you are, you *want* me to see you."

Will leaned closer then, pressing more of his weight onto his foot and Hannibal's grip weakened on Will's ankle, the pain scattering his thoughts. "But you are nothing more than a monster to me. I see you, and I don't want you."

"Will-" Hannibal gasped, a tear sliding down his face as he struggled. This wasn't right. Will wasn't supposed to kill him like this, there was no intimacy, no sense of belonging and no passion. Will was the one who was supposed to know him, to understand him. He stared up at blank eyes, barely registering the sound of Will clicking the safety off the gun. It was cold, and it was with a sinking feeling that Hannibal realized Will never saw him as anything more than a monster, and he never would. He didn't care about the other parts of Hannibal, he just despised the one part he'd discovered. He found one sign of infection and decided that amputating the whole limb was a better choice.

"Good bye, Doctor Lecter."

Bang.

Chapter End Notes

To those amazing people that left me comments on the last chapters: Thank you!! I really appreciate it and it makes me very happy to know people are enjoying the fic :) I hope you guys will like the next chapters as well^-^

Things are going to get interesting next chapter. Who will break out of it first? Will or Hannibal? If you guys have any guesses feel free to place your bets now! And as always, I'd love to hear what you guys have to say and your speculations about this fic. Any comments keep me fueled! (Also what do you guys think of Hannibal's loop scenarios so far? According to my beta they were painful xD)

You can find the masterpost with the chapter 3 graphic here on tumblr or retweet it here on Twitter. I just freaking love these graphics Dragon made, please give her some love as well!

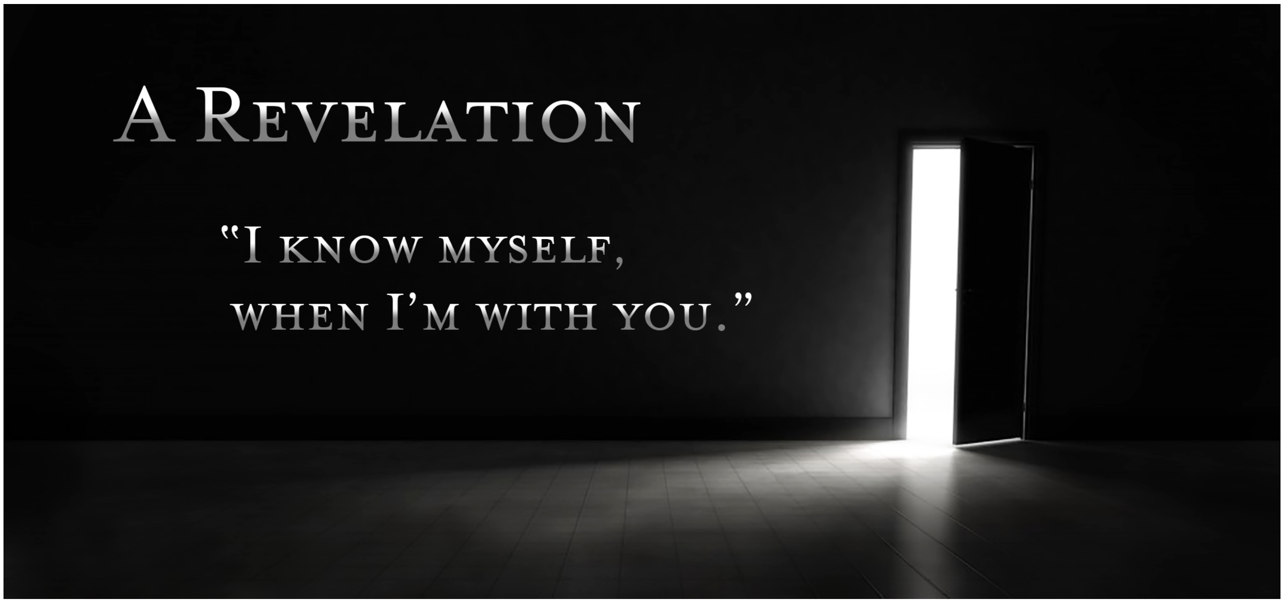
You can find my tumblr here. Feel free to drop by and say hi! I'm also active on Twitter and it'll be 99% Hannigram/Hannibal stuff so please check me out there! I'd love to get to know some of you. I'll likely post little snippets of what I'm working on next as well.

A Revelation

Chapter Notes

> Hello! It's been a very busy time for me so apologies for updating so late in the day (it's evening for me). We've been experiencing dangerously high winds here and it's been messing with my internet. I had just finished editing the chapter only to realize it randomly saved here and there so the draft was a mess because of the internet. I've been internally screaming since then and finally gathered myself together enough to fix everything with the help of my amazing beta Nicks.
>
> This is more of a shorter transition chapter as things pick up next chapter, but today we answer the question of: Who gets out first?
>
> The mystery of the place continues, but rest assured all questions will be answered soon.

See the end of the chapter for more notes



Every time Will walked past a certain point in the woods, he found himself waking up next to Molly. Sometimes, it was if he'd been outside for longer than a few hours, other times it was unclear what triggered it. Either way, he deduced that he was anchored to the house, despite the illusion of a normal life. He "went" to his lectures, every day, though in reality he never left the property. He only had vague impressions of students before he was forced to focus on his motor engine again, standing outside with a wrench in hand.

He was starting to grow frustrated, trying to find a way out of this place he was trapped in. It was grating on him, the over concerned overtures from Molly, and the way his frustrations were bleeding into his actions. He'd snapped at Wilson today, and he'd felt guilty for it even when he was almost a hundred percent sure it wasn't the real Wilson. This place he was confined in felt stifling, the mirage of normality choking the darkness in him. It made him want to scream, it made him want to lash out.

It made him ache for Hannibal. Hannibal with his stupid cannibal puns and indulgence in all the taboos humanity had to offer. He could only hope that wherever Hannibal was, it would be somewhere he could reach him.

Will had a theory, and day by day the evidence grew. He'd went over his memories several times, and separated them into two piles. One pile was what he deemed to be true, and the other was what had been concocted by this place. The last real memory he had was of Hannibal, and the way they'd held each other with bloodied hands before Will tugged them over the cliff.

If every memory after that was false, then Will had an inkling as to where he was. Add that onto the fact that his time here had been driving him insane with boredom and irritation, he's determined that it was likely he hadn't survived the fall. And if he didn't survive it, then he was stuck in some sort of afterlife.

It was no surprise to him that he was perhaps in a sort of Hell, designed to trap him in a life he never wanted and leave him to rot in normality. If he was in Hell, then Hannibal couldn't be far. He highly doubted Hannibal had survived the fall, as the man's wounds had been worse than his own. Though he had to admit that Hannibal's uncanny ability to survive anything could have saved him. Still, he couldn't imagine being in a realm without Hannibal in it.

The fates wouldn't allow it, Will was sure of that. If there was a Heaven and Hell, if there was any sort of greater power, then they would not allow Will to escape Hannibal's orbit. He couldn't escape Hannibal in life, it was unlikely he'd be free of the man now.

He had to believe that, because the alternative was unthinkable. He would find Hannibal, or Hannibal would find him, and they would go from there. Will still wasn't quite sure what to do with himself, but he figured that being aware he was stuck in Hell was a good starting point, and likely one that whoever was in charge didn't want him to have. They had taken great efforts to keep Will complacent and docile, going so far as to reset the world every time Will did something unsavory like try to leave.

"Hey boy," Will sighed, squatting down and rubbing a hand through the soothing fur on Wilson's head. "What do you think I should do?"

Wilson panted at him happily, and he laughed when his other dogs crowded him, whining for attention. He was grateful that whatever Hell he was in, they at least allowed him the company of his dogs. It made things just a little more bearable. He asked himself, with some amusement, if Hannibal approved of this place. Dante's Inferno had been a favorite topic of his, and he smiled, imagining Hannibal's reaction to a Hell completely different from Dante's descriptions.

Perhaps he would be irritated, or maybe he would smirk at Will with that special look he reserved just for him. Maybe he would look at him and his eyes would grow gentle, his mouth opening to say:

“It doesn’t matter which version of hell we reside in, as long as we exist together, it is a heaven of our own making.”

Will looked up, eyes growing a little misty as Hannibal regarded him with that affectionate look he’d been imagining in his mind’s eye.

“Hello, Hannibal,” Will stood, dusting himself off before drinking in the sight of him. He was in a three piece suit, the one with a purple patterned vest on the backside which was a personal favorite of Will’s. He remembered the first time he’d seen Hannibal wear it, and how he couldn’t help the way his eyes had lingered on his therapist. Now, he could stare all he wanted. This Hannibal was a product of his own mind, after all. Will opened his mouth, hesitating before realizing there was no one here to judge him for this. “I’ve missed you.”

Hannibal’s lips quirked up into an almost smug look, though Will knew he was just peacocking, obviously pleased. “And I you, dear boy.”

Will scoffed, looking away and focusing on a patch of grass next to him. He rubbed the back of his neck with a hand, sighing. “You’re only saying that because you’re a figment of my imagination.”

“Perhaps,” Hannibal allowed, and Will looked up in trepidation when Hannibal stepped closer to him, cupping his face with a warm hand. “But you are a part of me, just as I am a part of you. You know me.”

Hannibal rested his forehead against Will’s pressing close. They breathed in tandem for several long minutes, the worries in Will’s mind quieting before coming back in a tidal wave of fear. Hannibal always pulled at Will’s vulnerabilities, taking delight in displaying Will like that, flayed open and all his insecurities spread out for Hannibal to peruse.

“I wish you were here,” Will confessed, swallowing hard as he clenched his eyes shut, fighting back the despair that threatened to choke him. He’d been doing so well, refusing to linger too much on the thoughts of what ifs. What if he couldn’t get out of here? What if he was stuck in an eternity of banality, without the real Hannibal here to keep him sane? “I know myself, when I’m with you. Here, I can feel myself slipping away. I feel lost.”

I feel lost without you.

He couldn’t voice it, but he knew Hannibal would know all the same.

Hannibal stayed silent, long enough for Will to finally open his eyes and step back, wanting to hear what Hannibal had to say.

“I can not claim that I know what you’re struggling with right now, Will,” Hannibal started, his gaze focused on a point past Will’s shoulder as he grew serious, his face grim. “But there are some cracks that can not be fixed, some spaces that are left empty for a reason. Find them, and find me.”

Hannibal’s gaze flickered over to him then, full of dark amusement, a smirk on his lips. “When life becomes maddeningly real, think of me.”

Then, within one blink and the next, he was gone.

Will let out a frustrated huff, scrubbing at his face, his fingertips pressing where Hannibal had touched, trying to feel the warmth the man had exuded.

“Still as cryptic as ever,” Will muttered, though his lips danced with the beginnings of a smile. “Your insight is appreciated, Doctor Lecter.”

“This is all I ever wanted for us.”

Will met his gaze, and Hannibal frowned at the empty look in his eyes. It tugged at the predator within him, the one that saw Will as *his*, it ached and roiled against his person suit, growling. It wanted to tear and destroy, it wanted to drink the blood of the man standing before him. Will had always served as a temptation for Hannibal. He cared for him deeply, to the extent that he wanted to consume him. It was the only way he could feel Will, as deeply as possible, and to cherish him by way of blood and sacrifice.

This violence was different, it was baseless, a tug of annoyance that he felt before he killed someone particularly rude. Will meant more to him than food, and the out of place urge made Hannibal’s hackles raise, his mind sharpening. He set his wine glass down on the side table, staring into the fireplace.

Distantly, he heard the harsh words Will said to him, tuning them out in a way that he usually wouldn’t with his ever so clever boy. Hannibal rubbed absentmindedly at his mouth, licking his lips and tasting the scent of Will in the air. It was Will, and the very essence of Will, permeating his senses and coating his tongue like nectar.

Yet, there was something artificial there. His scent wasn’t as delicious as Hannibal remembered it. The man before him acted like Will, spoke and smelled like him, but he was a poor imitation. A mere echo.

There was also something about this conversation that felt familiar, almost as if they've been here once before. It was a startling sense of deja vu, one he can't recall he's ever had, and so it made it all the more alarming.

Hannibal inhaled deeply, his mind clearer than it had been in days (weeks? Months? It feels like he's been here forever). Hannibal stood up and approached the man wearing Will's face.

"Tell me, where are we? And more importantly, who are you?"

Not-Will met his eyes with a blank look, an emptiness in them that sparked a sense of curiosity in Hannibal. It was like looking at a doll, or perhaps a snapshot of a human.

"I believe you've had too much to drink, Doctor Lecter," Not-Will started to say, but was quickly cut off when Hannibal rested his palm against the imposter's neck, not cutting off his air, not yet, but enough of a threat for Not-Will to pause.

"You are not who I think you are, though you pretend well enough. I'm ashamed to admit it took me this long to notice you are not him," Hannibal glanced around, taking note of the shadows that covered the corners of the room, dissolving into a void of nothingness past a certain point. "Tell me, where are we?"

Not-Will stayed silent, staring blankly up at Hannibal as if he hadn't heard the words. Hannibal tightened his fingers, frowning when the man didn't react to his actions. "Speak," Hannibal whispered, a dangerous edge to his voice.

"You wouldn't kill me," Not-Will said slowly, even more emotionless than before. A fading image of something wearing the face of a human. "You love him too much."

"Oh?" Hannibal murmured, a small smirk on his face as he stared down at the man with all the wrath of a god. "And how would you presume to know what I will, or will not do?"

Hannibal leaned in, eyes narrowed as the man stood placidly, no longer pretending to be something he wasn't. "You see, I will kill you, precisely because I care for him too much. They say the greatest form of love is one borne of death and darkness. You're a poor substitute, but you'll be a suitable sacrifice."

Hannibal stepped closer, until he had him wrapped up in his arms. It was a mockery of a hug, and when the man didn't react with anything more than a slight twitch, Hannibal moved. With a slow exhale and a swift jerk of his hands, he snapped the man's neck.

Hannibal let the body fall from his arms, staring dispassionately at the blank look on the man wearing Will's face. It looked disconcerting on him, and he certainly didn't deserve to wear Will's handsome features. Hannibal liked to believe that if Will was to die by his hand, he would embrace it with a look of bliss and rapture. It would be a beautiful mutual destruction, both of them taking each other's lives in a final consummation of their all-consuming love.

With a sniff of disdain, and feeling more than a little inconvenienced by what had just happened, Hannibal looked around once more. The room had only one doorway out, and it was only now with a clear mind that he was slowly realizing the memories after the fall felt false. As if they were a film reel or flashes of images shown from a distance. It didn't feel like real memories, and had a distinct emotionless quality to it.

In fact, as he rifled through his mind, he realized that there were some memories that had been altered, pathways that ended in death or isolation for him or Will. It was interesting, seeing another version of Will like that, but it wasn't the real Will. He wouldn't settle for some poor imitation of Will, it was his uniqueness that drew Hannibal to him after all.

It was easy to assume then, that the fall had given him a form of amnesia which then developed false memories to make up for the empty space. Unlikely, but much better than the alternative: that he had not survived the fall and was stuck in some sort of limbo. Hannibal wasn't a god fearing man, in fact, he'd like to believe that if there was a god, he was certainly this god's equal if not superior.

So it wasn't a surprise to him that when he stepped out of the room and was met with endless doorways placed in an indecipherable pattern across a rocky terrain, each door different from the next, that he let out a small sound of interest, making a sound conclusion.

"Ah, so this is what Hell is like."

Will laid in bed that night, awake and still as he stared up at the ceiling in what was fast becoming a nightly pattern. He carefully slid out of bed, padding on silent feet out into the hallway. He paused for a moment, turning back to glance into the bedroom and watch Molly with wary eyes.

So far, Molly was the only person he's seen in this place. She was the only constant in his life, and it couldn't be a coincidence. She could also just be a figment of his imagination, but she felt too real, and slightly different from the Molly he knew. Will had a sinking feeling that perhaps this Molly was the warden of his cell, the one meant to guard him and keep him from leaving. She was always there, trying to calm him and cajole him into a docile state whenever he had nightmares orr panic attacks.

It wasn't anything different from what the real Molly had done for him, but now that he was in this place, it was suspicious. With one last look to make sure she was asleep, he snuck over to Walter's room. He remembered Hannibal's words, of spaces left purposefully empty.

If this was his Hell and Molly was in it, why wasn't Walter? A wife and a child were the perfect combination of normality, and yet Molly was the only one he saw. She spoke of Walter often, and made the motions to go pick him up from school. In fact, when Molly returned and he was working on the motor outside, he would often hear Walter's familiar voice and the cadence of his running steps. Yet, when he tried to catch a glimpse of the child, there would be no one there, as if he'd stepped into the house before Will could see him. It was too much of a coincidence for him to accept, and he hoped this was one of those "empty spaces' Hannibal had told him about.

Licking his lips, suddenly nervous, Will placed his hand on the doorknob. He turned it with some hesitation before opening it slowly, wishing not for the first time he had his gun with him.

It was dark in the room, and Will cursed his lack of foresight for not bringing a flashlight or at least his phone to illuminate the room. He turned to go get it but paused, something poking at his awareness. He turned back to the room, squinting at it dubiously.

This darkness wasn't natural, and it dawned on him what was off. There was a window next to Walter's bed. There was always sufficient moonlight streaming in to light the room, enough that Walter hadn't needed a nightlight in his room.

Will stepped back, unnerved by the fact that even the light from the hallway didn't seem to be able to permeate the darkness in the room. It sucked everything into it, and as he stared, Will wondered if it would take him too.

Where did it lead to?

"Will?" Molly's sleepy voice called out, and he cursed under his breath, quickly closing the door with a soft click and padding back into his bedroom, feigning sheepishness.

"Sorry," He apologized softly, sliding back into bed. "I had a nightmare and didn't want to wake you."

"Oh," She replied, a look of sympathy on her face. She rested her hand delicately on Will's arm, and his smile tightened, threatening to turn into a snarl. As if sensing his mood, she kept the touch light and quick, her hand retracting soon after with an apologetic smile. "Next time you have one, wake me up. I can keep you company."

"Okay," Will agreed, though he knew there was no way in hell he would acquiesce to that request. He was still highly suspicious of her motives, and whether or not she was a friend or a foe. If his theory proved correct, then she was probably a demon and he needed to move cautiously before she caught on that he’d realized something wasn’t right. “Go back to sleep.”

She nodded, though she waited until he also laid back down before closing her eyes, her breathing evening out soon after. Will grit his teeth, uncomfortable by the fact that he was likely in bed with some unknown demon.

A part of him found his irritation at the situation ironic, after all, he’d long since accepted that he didn’t mind getting into bed with demons. Except in his case, he was only interested in one demon in particular.

He stared up at the shifting shapes on the ceiling, and smiled when the shadow of a familiar head and pair of dark antlers grew across the ceiling. It lulled him to sleep, and he let himself rest, content to have his monster watch over him.

Chapter End Notes

Thank you kindly to those who commented last chapter and let me know your theories. I was actually quite surprised that many of you thought Will would get out first, though now that I'm re-reading it I can see how that may be. However, there's a reason why Hannibal gets out first (several reasons) and a large part of it is Hannibal himself as well as the rules of the realm so to speak.

All will be revealed in due time! In the meantime, please do leave me a comment and let me know what you think :) It really makes me happy! I've noticed that the Hannibal fandom has been supremely quiet recently and I'm unsure why. (Probably because I joined so late haha) But any interactions fuel my little Fannibal heart. I've been loving your theories, and though I can't say more on it, you guys have really great ideas, even things I wouldn't have considered.

The amazing graphic is created by the ever wonderful Dragon, and you can find it here on tumblr or retweet it here on Twitter. She's been doing such a good job with all these despite her busy schedule <3 Many thanks to you my friend.

Now, will Hannibal and Will ever get to interact? At this point it's all been false images, but only time will tell. Thank you to all the lovely people reading this, and I hope you have a wonderful day.

You can find my tumblr here. Feel free to drop by and say hi! I'm also active on Twitter and it'll be 99% Hannigram/Hannibal stuff so please check me out there! I'd love to get to know some of you. I'll likely post little snippets of what I'm working on next as well.

A Reunion

Chapter Notes

Hello! I've had a really rough two weeks and wasn't sure I'd be able to get this chapter out in time. But I made it through the encouragement of my lovely artist jdragon122 and the help of my ever amazing beta Nicks. I'm always concerned about how hard they work, but I definitely appreciate the time they take to help me <3

I hope you guys will enjoy this one. Will and Hannibal finally meet! (Kind of) We also learn more about this place, and meet some new people. Oh and Hannibal murders again but what's new lol

Without further ado, enjoy!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Hannibal had opened the first few doors, out of curiosity. He was fascinated with this realm and its mechanics. There was something startlingly clinical about the place, the way it sectioned each person off into their own little space. After peeking into the first few rooms, each one showing scenes that could easily be labeled as personal nightmares of the unfortunate soul it housed, Hannibal had come to a few conclusions.

The first was that despite all of Dante's imagination, he could have never anticipated something as meticulous as this. Each room was designed to make the soul miserable, keeping them stuck in a loop of their own making as they lived through their worst fears.

The second was that the "people" in those rooms were actually demons wearing the faces of those that the person cared about. Usually the demons were the ones doing the torturing, whether it was with cruel words or the more direct method of knives and fists. Hannibal could see that they used whichever method the person feared the most, and he could see the beauty in that. He always did appreciate the workings of the mind, and if Hell relied on the psyche to torture, then all the more brilliant.

Still, it was almost amusing how it seemed like he was the only one who had broken out of his Hell-loop. Some of the doors remained stubbornly closed, and Hannibal walked past them rather leisurely, staring up at the orange-red sky in interest. There was no sun or moon, no source he could find for the glow that seemed to touch everything he saw. The light seemed to just exist, as if it was a pale imitation of Earth's lighting.

It reminded him of pictures of the surface of Mars, the dust-red apocalyptic feeling lending the place a sense of isolation. It was silent, not a single wisp of wind drifting by, only the sound of his own feet crunching through pebbles.

Hannibal walked with no destination in mind. There didn't seem to be an end point to this place. The same flat landscape existed as far as he could see. His eyes tracked over the various doors with a vague sort of interest, hoping perhaps that one of them would be familiar to him.

For once he didn't have a set plan. In fact, this new setting gave him a sense of freedom, as if he didn't have to keep up his people suit. His only goal was to find Will, wherever he was.

There was a thought then, that perhaps Will had survived the fall. His dear boy had always been rather hardy, surviving encounter after encounter with deadly killers. Despite that, Hannibal knew in the space within his mind he reserved for Will, that they could not exist in a world without each other. If Will was alive now, he wouldn't be for long, once he realized Hannibal had left him for the afterlife.

Still, it would make his stay here much easier if Will was already dead. Hannibal was a patient man, but after tasting what he'd wanted for so long, seeing Will covered in blood and eyes aflame with hunger, he *needed* the man like never before. There was an uncertainty to Will's current status, but nevertheless, Hannibal would search for him in this barren landscape. He had nothing else to do after all, and an eternity without Will was unthinkable.

There was a sudden chill up his spine but Hannibal didn't falter in his steps, showing no indication that he'd noticed. He was being watched. He allowed the barest hint of a smirk to cross his face, eager to meet his stalker.

He didn't have to wait long, as suddenly two figures appeared before him, stopping him in his tracks with pointed spears. It was a clear warning, and Hannibal stopped rather placidly, raising an eyebrow as he placed his hands casually behind his back. It was a man and a woman, both with dark hair and dark eyes, their features similar enough that they could be mistaken for siblings. They looked human to him, and Hannibal noted with some curiosity that their clothing wasn't in any particular style he'd seen before. It was a fascinating blend of cloth and metal, a robe that seemed to have a protective, metallic shift to it. Hannibal chanced a glance at the tip of the spear, noting the dark material and how it looked more stone than metal.

"Human, it is time you returned to your cell." The woman spoke, a calm to it that belied the steel underneath. It was an order, not a request.

"Not even a greeting?" Hannibal hummed, tilting his head and smiling with false humor. "That is rather rude of you."

The man pushed the tip of his spear closer, until it pressed against Hannibal's suit. Hannibal's lips thinned into a menacing line, staring down at the way the tip cut into his suit and ruined the stitching. Hannibal slowly looked back up, eyes flaring with barely restrained anger, the curl of his lips close to snarl.

"You don't belong out here," The man argued, stepping closer but keeping the spear at the same length in between them. "In fact, you shouldn't have even been able to escape."

“Hm,” Hannibal hummed, amused. “I had a rather unpleasant time there. Is there a manager I can speak to?”

The woman shared a bewildered look with her companion, frowning as she turned back to meet his eyes. “It’s meant to be unpleasant. This is Hell, not a vacation spot.”

Hannibal felt everything fall into place then, now with solid confirmation that this place was indeed what he thought it was. “Fascinating, Dante was imaginative, yet he could never fathom the true beauty of Hell.”

“Listen,” The man started saying, voice more gruff now as he let his spear drop to hang casually at his side, obviously deeming Hannibal a non-threat. He grabbed Hannibal by his collar with his free hand, ignoring the way his companion tried to stop him from getting closer to Hannibal. “We’re not here to play mind games with you. That’s what the rooms are for. Now, you either step back into yours, or we flay your soul open and take pieces of you as souvenirs.”

Hannibal grinned, every particle of his body singing in joy at the purity of this place, the way it suited his habits just fine. “I understand the appeal of souvenirs, though I hope you won’t mind me taking one from you.”

Before the man could register Hannibal’s words, he leaned forward lightning fast and ripped out the man’s throat with his teeth. He tried to raise his arm and use his spear, but Hannibal grabbed it and twisted his wrist until he let out of a gurgle of pain and fell to his knees. His weakened grip allowed Hannibal to relinquish him of his spear, and Hannibal hefted it in his hand, enjoying the weight of this new weapon.

The man’s flesh was still in his mouth, and he felt saliva pooling at the back of his throat in anticipation of this delightful treat. He stared the woman straight in the eyes as he tipped his head back, just enough to slide the piece of meat into his mouth. He chewed slowly, savoring every flavor before swallowing.

He licked his lips, relishing her horrified look as she stood frozen. “A different taste than what I’m used to, but no less delectable. Spicy, with a tinge of cold sweetness. I hope you will taste just as good.”

She seemed to break out of her daze then, and with a cry of grief, she lunged towards him. He danced out of her reach, their spears colliding as he deflected her attack. It was a hard but short battle, her actions fueled by rage and no match for the cold calculated moves Hannibal threw forth. When she gave him an opening, he took advantage of it and slid the spear effortlessly across her throat, bathing in the arterial spray of her blood.

It wasn’t as red as he’d expected. Instead, their blood was black. He was curious as to what manner of creature they were, but it was likely they were the demons that guarded this place. Hannibal stepped forward, taking the weight of her body as she collapsed, her life leaving her.

Once he laid her next to her companion, he stared down at them, contemplating his next move. He still felt hunger, but it wasn’t one for food. No, he felt a hunger for Will, to be in his presence and recuperate in the bone arena of his mind. However, if there was any sin he was guilty of, it would certainly be gluttony.

A lack of hunger didn't mean he couldn't whet his appetite before meeting Will.

Decision made, he hummed happily as he snapped the spear in half, taking the now shorter sharp upper half and digging it into the man's body. In this new reality, he didn't need to worry about cooking his food. Though of course, the cooking was a part of the presentation, and allowed him to adjust each ingredient to his taste. There was no one to perform for now, and he relished in the savagery of reaching into the demon's body and ripping out parts of him to feast on.

Crouched over their bloodied forms, Hannibal wondered if this was how vultures subsisted on food. If they also dug into bodies without care or regard, only focusing on their next meal. He licked his bloodied teeth, hands now black with blood.

It reminded him of a dark night, the way the Dragon's blood had looked black in the moonlight. The way Will had looked, beautiful in his acceptance of his new self. Now, he was alone.

Hannibal sighed, using the spear to cut off a piece of the woman's leg to nibble on. Their clothing proved to be rather difficult to remove and puncture, but Hannibal was nothing if not stubbornly determined.

"Do you suppose Will is somewhere here?" Hannibal asked the dead bodies, not expecting an answer. He sighed again, standing up and taking note of the streaks of blood on his suit, now covered in dirt. "Perhaps I was too hasty. I do hope the next demons I encounter will be more open to conversation."

With one last fond glance at his first meal in Hell, he continued his journey forward, steps light with humor. He had feared he was the only one in this place, but if there were others like those two, he would have plenty to keep him entertained until he found Will.

Will very rarely had the opportunity to dream. More often than not, he had nightmares, visions of death and gore that followed him from his waking days and back. A never-ending cycle of morbidity.

So it came as a surprise to him when he opened his eyes and found himself in a familiar setting. The fireplace was set, flickering brightly past Hannibal's desk. They were in Hannibal's study, where he met his patients. Will was sitting in his usual sofa chair, and sat across from him, prim and regal, was the man himself. He was staring at Will curiously, and Will tilted his head forward in greeting, happy with this turn of events. Sometimes dreams with Hannibal quickly turned into nightmares, but regardless, he always cherished the time they had together in this space.

They both stared at each other for a long moment, gaze warm and affectionate in a way that wouldn't have been possible before the fall.

"I can't escape you even in my dreams," Will broke the silence with a low murmur, taking note of the way Hannibal smiled, as if the very thought of Will inescapably tied to him filled him with pleasure.

"Nor can I, William," Hannibal answered, leaning back and crossing his legs carefully. "I trust that you are well?"

Will shrugged then, leaning back and mirroring Hannibal's position, a habit borne of empathy. "As well as I can be. I took your advice and I've been seeking the empty spaces in this place. Molly stopped me when I tried to go in, but I'll try again tomorrow."

As he spoke, Hannibal seemed to perk up, his eyes sharpening with delight as he leaned forward and licked his lips. It unnerved Will, how much more…real his dream-Hannibal seemed to be, compared to his hallucinations. In his hallucinations Hannibal always seemed to treat him more gently, yet here in his dreams, this Hannibal had a distinctly dangerous air to him.

“What did I tell you, Will?” Hannibal urged, a smile on his lips.

Will frowned, confused by the question. “Why do you ask? You’re the one that told me. Shouldn’t you know?”

“Humor me.”

It took a few more seconds of careful contemplation before Will answered. “You told me that to escape this place, this…*Hell*, I had to find the cracks that can’t be patched, and the spaces left purposefully empty.”

“Brilliant,” Hannibal breathed out, his eyes dark with a fervor that worried Will. “Even Hell cannot dull a mind as beautiful as yours.”

Will flushed, staring down at his lap and twining his fingers together before tapping them restlessly on his thighs. “Yeah well, you may be a concoction of my own mind, but despite everything, the voice inside my head belongs to you. An aching familiarity, one I can never escape from.”

“Every part of you belongs to me. It is only a matter of time before I find you, dear boy, and when I do, escape will be the last thing on your mind.” Hannibal practically purred out the words, his gaze heated as he uncrossed his legs and stood, walking forward with a predatory prowl in his steps.

Will’s eyes widened, and his heart skipped a beat before thundering forward in a frantic rhythm. He stood slowly, his tongue flicking out to lick his suddenly dry lips as he stepped towards Hannibal. It couldn’t be. It was too good to be true, but this…

“Hannibal?” Will’s voice was small, and he reached a hand out, desperate to feel Hannibal against him for real. He didn’t care that this was still a dream, or that he would wake up in Hell again. He didn’t even understand how Hannibal had made it into his dreams, but he knew without a lick of doubt that this was the real Hannibal. Perhaps their bond in life had led them here, their relationship marinated in pain and nourished with sacrifice.

“Will-“ Hannibal licked his lips and stretched his hand out, just as eager to feel Will against his body again. Before they could make contact however, the space between them wavered. Will pressed forward desperately, but there seemed to be an invisible barrier, one that he couldn’t cross.

“Hannibal!” Will cried out, hands slamming against the air in front of him futilely. Hannibal for his part stood with an eerie sense of calm, one hand resting against the barrier. The only sign of his ire was the snarl on his lips, eyes flinty with hellfire and retribution.

Finally, Will exhausted all his energy, and he pressed his forehead against the barrier, barely registering the fact that Hannibal ghosted his hand against the space there, as if he wanted to run his fingers through Will's curls and comfort him. It was that out-of-place gesture of intimacy that drew Will out of the pit of despair he'd fallen into.

"Will," Hannibal was startlingly serious, mouth pressed into a grim line as he stared hard into Will's eyes, dragging his gaze over Will's body as if checking him for any changes Hell may have wrought on him. "Where are you?"

"I'm…" Will sighed, stepping back and running his hand down his face with a frustrated groan. He let his hand fall back by his side, a helpless look on his face as he bit at his bottom lip in a nervous gesture. "It is the place where I lived with Molly and Walter."

"Ah," Hannibal's eyes sharpened with something almost smug, a glint to it. "I see your version of Hell includes your little family."

"Yes," Will allowed the transgression, aware that Hannibal felt particularly happy about the fact that Will's Hell consisted of the family he'd made without Hannibal. "But it isn't too bad. Not as bad as I anticipated it to be, at least. It's just…the same thing over and over again, every day. I don't mind the monotony, I find repetitive motions soothing, but this place doesn't have…"

Will trailed off, looking to the side of the room, staring hard at the floorboards. Hannibal picked up on his hesitance and pressed gently forward, a hand against the barrier like he wanted to touch Will, coax him with guiding words and a firm press of hands to shoulder like he used to do.

"It doesn't have what, Will?" Hannibal's voice was soft, a little rough as he waited with bated breath for Will's answer.

Will darted his eyes up for a moment, the resignation in them warming Hannibal to his core. If he could purr, he would be showing his satisfaction in a multitude of ways, but as it was, it was all he could do to hold in his smirk.

"It doesn't have you in it," Will gritted out, narrowing his eyes at Hannibal. He saw past the placid mask Hannibal wore, and he knew that every word he said only fed Hannibal's obsession. Sure enough, Hannibal's lips tilted just the smallest amount to the side, eyes shining with a dark possessiveness as he digested Will's words. Will let out a huff of laughter at that, stepping back and crossing his arms against his chest, fingers digging into his elbows. "Aren't we a pair of fools, Doctor Lecter? Me, struggling to place myself back in your grasp, and you, yearning for the company of the one that killed you."

Hannibal hummed a small sound of assent in the back of his throat, dropping his mask and letting his pleasure show on his face. "We seem to remember the order of events differently. You didn't kill me, Will. I willingly went with you, because where you go, I will follow."

"I killed us both, and look where it got us. Stuck in this place with little to no hope of getting out," Will bit out, hating the fact that he felt guilt for his actions. To him, his decision had been one borne of what little good he had left in him. He knew that if he did not take them over that cliff, the world would be burdened with the whimsy of two killers, and they would never be caught. Will knew beyond a shadow of doubt, that if they had survived the fall, he would have murdered anyone who tried to separate them. The world would have burned on the pyre of their devotion and destructive love. There was no other option, except to take a leap of faith.

“That’s where you would be wrong, Will,” Hannibal smiled, a glint of sharp teeth as he showed a glimpse of the predator inside. “I’ve already escaped my Hell.”

Will blinked at him in disbelief, before laughing, a hand running through his hair. “Of course you did,” Will smiled at Hannibal, his expression fading into a more thoughtful look as he pressed a hand to his mouth. His eyes narrowed as he studied Hannibal, a shaky breath of laughter ghosting onto his palms. “You enjoyed your Hell.”

Hannibal nodded, no longer surprised at how easily Will could see the deepest, darkest parts of him. “It was rather enlightening. It allowed me to experience you in a way that would have had fatal consequences, but in my Hell, every scenario eventually reset so there were no real repercussions to my actions.”

“I’m sure that was plenty fun for you,” Will muttered, taking in the comfortable way Hannibal was standing, as if the Hell he’d experienced had been child’s play. He had an inkling as to what Hannibal’s Hell would have been like, but he didn’t know if he dared to ask. “My Hell has been one of banal normality.”

“An interesting choice, certainly,” Hannibal nodded, contemplative as he tilted his head and studied Will. “This place seems to know our fears, and it forces us to live through a multitude of these nightmare scenarios. The fear keeps us placid, the horror of our actions numbing us and keeping us blind to the truth of this place.”

“Then how did you break out of yours?” Will asked, more than a little curious. He can’t say he’s surprised Hannibal managed to find a way out. The man was nothing if not resourceful.

“I believe that fear is an emotion I’ve long since grown out of,” Hannibal answered, more than happy to divulge his theories to Will. “Perhaps this place simply ran out of content to torture me with, and when the scenarios started looping, I figured it out fairly quickly.”

Will blinked at Hannibal, something about his descriptions piqued Will’s interest. His Hell seemed to be very different from Will’s. Hannibal’s jumped around in different scenes, living them out until the end. Will, on the other hand, had lived this one nightmare continuously, with little to no change. He couldn’t understand the purpose of his Hell, except to perhaps bore him into submission.

“So tell me, Will, are there any other descriptors for your Hell? Any information will aid in my search for you.”

Will frowned, shrugging as he took another step back. “Why would I want you to find me?” Will’s face pulled into an ugly grin, one closer to a sneer than a smile. He knew he was being defensive but he couldn’t help it. He ached for Hannibal, but he wasn’t ready to go back into the arms of the devil. Earlier he had impulsively tried to move towards Hannibal, desperate with longing, but their conversation had reminded him exactly why Hannibal was dangerous. Hannibal was too much of a wild card, and if they had eternity ahead of them, there was no telling what Hannibal would want to do. It was unlikely he would ever let Will go, not without pain and sacrifice, at least. “You wish for me to placidly return to the hand that fed me, bled me. Tell me, Doctor Lecter, if we have eternity ahead of us, what will be your canvas of choice this time? My lungs? My heart?”

Will paused, taking in the way Hannibal was standing loosely, though he could read the roiling anger underneath. “Or will it be my mind this time?” Will whispered, his hand coming up to touch where the scar would have been on his forehead, if this place hadn’t changed his appearance to match his current timeline. It was like that incident had never happened, but he knew better. He remembered the bite of the blade, the resignation and betrayal. “Will you finally consume me?”

Hannibal stepped closer, and Will resisted the urge to move further away, confident the barrier between them would keep the beast back.

Hannibal stared at Will, and for once Will couldn’t tell what he was thinking. He pressed his lips together, a shiver running down his spine at the barely restrained hunger in Hannibal’s gaze.

When Hannibal finally spoke, it was a quiet sound, almost gentle. “Do you know what I want, Will?”

Will scoffed, looking away and wishing he had his glasses on him right now. “Who the hell knows what you really want Hannibal? I sure don’t.”

“Don’t you?” Hannibal countered, raising a hand to rest against the barrier, fingers tracing the wavering air with idle curiosity. “My motives are the same now as they were when we first met. I wish for you to become your true self, to let go, and for you to allow me to witness your metamorphosis.”

“Becoming implies choice. I never had a choice in any of this,” Will bared his teeth in a snarl, anger rearing its ugly head, delayed feelings to the injustices he’d faced and the manipulations he’d barely survived.

“Maybe you believe that now, but a part of you knew the choices you made would lead you down this path. I may have stoked the flames, but you were the one to strike the match. The moment we met, your becoming was inevitable.”

Will felt his heart thudding in his chest, his breathing a little heavier as he refused to face the truth in Hannibal’s words. “Don’t make yourself sound like some selfless martyr. You wanted me to become just like you, because then you’d have someone to see you. You know, most people would get a dog or something if they were lonely. You just had to be a fucking psycho about it.”

Hannibal inclined his head in agreement, though a soft smile played on his lips despite Will’s harsh words. “I admit, I did see the potential in you as a companion. But you weren’t ready, and it was only by becoming that you would see the world as I saw it.”

“And how do you see the world, Hannibal?”

“I see it as a breeding ground for human sins, a cesspit of the rude and unworthy,” Hannibal’s eyes focused on Will then, and the sharp intensity in them stole his breath away. “But you, my beloved, were a rarity among the useless hordes of humanity. I saw value in your mind, and I saw an opportunity for friendship in the buried depths of your darkness.”

“Friends don’t do this to each other, Hannibal,” Will’s voice was hoarse, his eyes wet and he couldn’t figure out if it was because of Hannibal’s confession, or because of his own reaction to it. “Our relationship is destructive.”

Hannibal was quiet for a long moment, before he broke eye contact and turned his gaze to the fireplace, the light flickering across the planes of his face. It struck Will then, how disarmingly beautiful Hannibal was, as if he was a statue brought to life. If someone presented an image of Hannibal shaped from marble and claimed it was the Devil’s visage, he would have believed them.

“I can’t live without you, and you can’t live without me,” Hannibal finally replied, eyes distant, and Will was unsettled to find a trace of remorse in his voice. Perhaps he too was aware that this brand of love would only lead to a bloody end, and certainly not a happy one. “I know you, and you know me in ways that we can’t change or rewind.”

Hannibal looked up then, something almost beseeching in the taut look on his face. “But now, we are no longer restrained by the limits of the mortal plane. We are not living, but nor are we dead, so don’t you think this is our second chance Will? An opportunity to be who we are without hesitation. No room for morality in the teeming depths of Hell.”

“Our actions had real consequences, Hannibal,” Will replied, after a long moment of quiet, his shoulders slumped and voice strained with exhaustion. “We can’t just dismiss who we were in life, because it led us to this moment here, both of us separated by the rules of Hell. There is no salvation here, only death and atonement.”

Hannibal snarled then, a sharp sound that made Will flinch back, overwhelmed by the strong look of conviction on Hannibal’s face. “If you think I would allow something as simple as Hell to keep us apart, then you have underestimated my hunger for you, Will.”

Will flushed, feeling off kilter by the sudden heated look Hannibal was sending him, and too stunned to reply.

“Hannibal-“

“Will!”

Will jolted awake, hands shaking and sweat pouring off of his body as he turned to see Molly staring down at him, propped up on an elbow and hovering over him in concern. “Are you alright?”

“Yeah, I-“ Will ran a trembling hand through his wet curls, licking his lips as he tried to voice his scrambled thoughts. “What happened?”

“You were shaking and flushed in your sleep and it looked like you were having a nightmare…” Molly looked apologetic, a sheepish smile on her face. “Did I wake you up for no reason?”

Will was shaking his head before he registered her question, reassuring her. “No, it’s fine. It…it wasn’t important anyways.”

Molly still looked a little guilty but he pulled her close, hoping it would appease her. When she sighed and melted into his hold, he sighed, pressing close and taking comfort from her touch for the first time since he’d found himself in this Hell. It wasn’t Hannibal, but he felt like he didn’t fit in his own skin right now, his heart still racing and emotions running high.

He knew he wouldn’t sleep that night, not after the dream he’d had. Still, he wondered if this was a one time thing, or if he would see Hannibal the next time he slept. Molly had saved him from answering Hannibal’s passionate words, and he was relieved he didn’t have to respond. Will understood that Hannibal was obsessed with him, and he knew he was just as focused on Hannibal, but sometimes, he forgot how tight a hold Hannibal had on his feelings for Will. The man was usually so restrained and controlled, that it was a shock to see him drop all pretenses. It was only when he caught glimpses of the monster underneath, that Will truly felt the yawning depths of Hannibal’s hunger for him, a yearning and desperation that wouldn’t be satisfied even if it ate Will whole.

No, Hannibal wanted everything from Will. His mind, and his heart.

He remembered words then, ones he’d asked Bedelia, when he’d had a moment of epiphany.

Is Hannibal…in love with me?

Chapter End Notes

I hope this chapter was enjoyable and yes!! They finally meet ahhhhhhh well kind of. Gotta have that pining after all ;) If you guys enjoyed it please do let me know, I would love to hear what you guys think. Did you like Will and Hannibal's interactions? I find them to be very fascinating, and Will's struggle with knowing that it's wrong yet unable to resist Hannibal is often so interesting. Any comments help keep me motivated!

I know last chapter was a transition chapter but the lack of interactions made posting a little disheartening. However, I appreciate the one person who commented even more and it was quite literally my motivation for posting this one. So this is for you matildaparacosm <3

And as always, my work is dedicated to my supportive artist and beta. You can find Dragon's lovely graphic here on tumblr or retweet it here on Twitter. Please give them some love, they worked so hard on it and once again pulled through for me despite their incredibly busy schedule.

You can find my tumblr here. I'm also active on Twitter and it'll be 99% Hannigram/Hannibal stuff so please check me out there! I'd love to get to know some of you.

A Teacup

Chapter Notes

> Ahhhh this is a little late sorry about that, I've had 3 midterms in a row this week and had about 7 hours of sleep these past three days so it was a little hard to get this out in time. Thank you for your patience.
>
> My amazing artist jdragon122 and my ever so helpful beta Nicks are keeping me going, as well as all you lovely people.
>
> Without further ado, please enjoy the chapter!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Hannibal moved through the rocky terrain, his steps a little more forceful than usual. He'd taken the suit jacket off, draping it over an arm. The top few buttons of his white button up shirt were left open, and there were still traces of black blood smeared on the clothes. It wasn't hot, despite how much the place resembled a desert. Still, it was a force of habit, and Hannibal was always one to indulge his impulses.

It amused him, how human his actions were in a place so out of the realm of human understanding. Even now, he habitually tried to keep up his person suit.

Perhaps it was this place, or maybe it was the fact that he had met Will again, but he felt that slowly but surely, he was losing the ability to keep up appearances. It was freeing, being here. He could truly be himself.

Hannibal couldn't help the way his lips pressed together, fingers tightening on his jacket as he remembered his dream with Will. He hadn't meant to fall asleep, after all, he wasn't exactly alive anymore so why would he need to sleep? However, after what he assumed was several hours of walking, he had started growing tired, but in a way that was bone deep and weighed him down. He'd sat down for a moment, grimacing at the red dirt that stuck to his suit pants, and had leaned against a door.

He'd closed his eyes, and when he'd opened them he had found himself in his study. At first he had assumed it was another one of his Hell loops, that perhaps this place had captured him once again. When he'd realized the Will across from him was the real Will, it took every ounce of self control he had in him not to take him right then and there. To lay claim to his soul, to finally consummate their relationship in the basest way possible.

But Will had seemed distressed, or at least a little hopeless, and Will's vulnerability had always called to him like a lighthouse to a drifting boat. It had helped sate his hunger, sharpening it to better taste Will at a later time. Like aged wine, he would let his hunger sit, allowing himself sips of Will's presence, until he could finally lay hands on him again.

His current irritation mainly came from the fact that his reunion with Will had been interrupted. He'd jerked out of the sleep he'd fallen into, eyes blinking heavily, a snarl still on his face as he reached a hand up for Will.

But Will was no longer there, the only thing in front of him was an expanse of red dirt, littered with upright doors and the fading impression of Will's intoxicating scent. He'd pressed his hand to his mouth, as if he could breathe in the last bits of Will that he'd managed to gather, pressed against the barrier and yearning for more.

Though Will had resisted his attempts to garner more information on his whereabouts, it was somewhat helpful that Will had specified it was the house he had shared with Molly. Hannibal himself had never seen the house, but he knew that each door had a vague impression of the person, and that he would never miss the door to Will's Hell. He would recognize it, just as he would be able to sense Will from miles away, like a shark scenting blood in the water.

It intrigued him that Will's Hell consisted of the life he'd had with Molly, after Hannibal had turned himself in to the FBI. It made him feel viciously smug, comforted by the knowledge that Will's very soul found life without Hannibal a living hell. Even then, a part of Hannibal felt a rearing sense of possessiveness, knowing that Will was spending his days with Molly. Hannibal would have been just as satisfied if Will's Hell had included him in it, because then, at least a version of him would be with Will, to remind the man of who he truly belonged to.

Hannibal quirked his mouth to one side, amused by his own thoughts as he wondered if he could accept Will interacting with a false version of him. Despite the fact that it was a shadow of Hannibal, it still made him feel angry, a part of him growling and pacing in violent circles at the thought of Will spending time with anyone that wasn't *him*. A Hell version of Hannibal wouldn't be able to see Will, no one was worthy of being in Will's presence, to drink from the nectar of Will's mind, except for him.

Anyone who tried to get close to what was his would face nothing but pain and despair, Hannibal would make sure of that. He had certainly succeeded in his goal to keep Will solely for himself in life, there was no reason to stop his possessive streak now that they were in Hell together.

His teeth itched with the urge to bury themselves into Will's neck, he wanted to open Will's skull and pull pieces of his brain out with greedy fingers. He wanted to feast, and he wanted to taste Will until there was nothing left. But if he did, there would be no more Will, and that was unimaginable.

Hannibal was broken out of his thoughts when he seemed to reach a road of sorts. He stared at the slightly different colored ground, tilting his head as he followed it with his eyes towards the distant horizon. There was no sign, but seeing as this place seemed endless, following this road was better than wandering aimlessly.

He stepped onto the brown dirt, humming a few strains of his favorite Beethoven piece as he continued onwards. It was a pity this place didn't have a phonograph, he did miss the smaller comforts of life, and he wished for some records to pass the time.

Ahead, standing in the middle of the road, was a man. Hannibal let a pleasant smile cross his face, steps a little more eager as he moved forward. If this man could help him, that would be excellent, but if not, then Hannibal would have another snack at the expense of the man's life.

"Hello," Hannibal greeted, as he came to a stop in front of the man, taking in the same chainmail cloth armor the previous two he'd met had worn. "It is a delight to make your acquaintance. My name is Hannibal Lecter and I'm looking for a friend. His name is Will Graham, and he has a tendency to wander off without me."

The man remained silent, his flinty blue eyes boring into Hannibal's with an almost bored expression. He was standing upright like a soldier, his spear resting in his grip so that it touched the ground and the pointed tip was pointed straight up. He had a messy mop of curly hair that reminded Hannibal of Will, and just the thought of the man made him hunger.

"There are no friends in Hell. Leave, or I will make you."

Hannibal was surprised the man spoke, he seemed to be the strong silent type, but if the demon deigned to humor him then he wasn't one to miss a good conversation.

"You do not wish to detain me?" Hannibal asked curiously, rocking back on the heels of his feet, posture loose and deceptively harmless. "I have to admit, the other two were more exciting than you were."

"The other two?" Suddenly the demon's eyes flared with something akin to anger. He pointed the spear at Hannibal's chest, ripping up the white button down. Hannibal sighed, lifting a hand up to grasp the wooden part of the spear, wondering why everyone in Hell seemed intent on shredding his clothes. "What did you do?"

"I did not do anything, I merely defended myself," Hannibal sniffed, though he didn't hide the feral grin as he dropped his false genial expression. He licked his lips, a mockery and a taunt. "However, they did taste so delicious. I wonder, will you taste the same?"

"What-" The demon's outraged words were cut off when he thrust his spear forward. Hannibal had anticipated this and quickly moved to the side. He tugged the spear towards him with one hand and lifted his palm in a sharp jabbing motion, knocking it against the underside of the man's chin. He choked, biting his tongue and his head flying backwards at the impact. Not giving him even a second to recover, Hannibal took advantage of his weakened grip on the spear to pull it completely out of his hands.

The demon was glaring at him, hands pressed against his mouth as blood gushed out in between his fingers.

"Ah," Hannibal sighed, letting out an almost disappointed 'tsk' sound as he spun the spear in his hand, hefting the weight in a palm until it felt comfortable for him to wield. "I do apologize, I hadn't meant to mute you. I did enjoy our conversation just now, and as you can see I am searching for someone. If you would be so kind as to spell out the answer for me on the ground, perhaps with your blood, I will be out of your hair."

The demon let out a roar of anger, words melding together to make a garble of shouts that sounded vaguely like "You fucking psycho!" before Hannibal was rudely tackled. The demon gasped at the impact, and looked down at his chest in disbelief. In his impulsiveness, he had disregarded the spear Hannibal had in his hands, and now, it was lodged deep in his chest. It had punctured straight through his heart, if he had one. Hannibal had made sure of that with the precision of an experienced surgeon.

The demon dropped to his knees with a groan, hands grasping at the spear in a futile effort to staunch the bleeding. Hannibal ignored his useless scrambling, weaving a hand through those curls and tugging his head back in a sharp motion that had the demon crying out.

"I asked you a question and I would like an answer now. Where is Will Graham?"

Hannibal didn't move a muscle when the man spat a glob of blood at him, the disgusting substance landing on his cheek. Slowly, he raised his free hand and wiped it away with the once white sleeve of his button up.

"Now," Hannibal's voice was deadly quiet as he tightened his grip on the man's hair until he let out a yelp of pain. "That was rather rude, wouldn't you agree? And do you know what we do with the rude?"

Without waiting for an answer, Hannibal tilted the demon's head back until his tendons stood taut and lunged for his throat, ripping it out in one solid chunk. He chewed on it, pressing the man down onto his back with his knees, staring dispassionately down at him as he choked on his own blood. He swallowed, letting out a satisfied sigh at the shocked look on the now dead demon's face.

"We eat them."

He grinned with bloodied teeth, the taste of rust on his tongue as he felt some of the blood drip down his chin. He leaned in, and ripped out another piece of meat, feeling himself grow more energized with every bite. It was feral and a far cry from his usual restrained and poised way of dining, but here there was no one to perform for.

"Through life, we grow the weapons necessary to eat as we please, and through death, we sustain ourselves on the life of those we sacrifice," Hannibal murmured, patting the man's face almost affectionately as he stood up after he'd eaten his fill. He carefully pressed the sleeve of his button up to his face, a rather dainty motion as he did his best to mop up the blood.

Once he'd gathered himself together again, he could feel that the mask he always wore had grown another crack. The longer he stayed here, the harder it was to pretend to be someone else, something *human*.

He smiled, shooting one last glance over his shoulder at the eviscerated body of the demon. He felt free, and that was truly a rare gift in the timeline of his life. It would be all the more improved if he had Will to share his experiences with.

At the thought of Will, Hannibal's smile softened into one of longing. If he couldn't find Will on his own, he would have to make sure the next demon he'll meet he keeps alive long enough to torture some answers out of them. He missed Will, and it was not a sensation he liked.

It seemed the journey ahead would be long and arduous indeed. With one last sigh, he moved onwards, dropping his suit jacket on the ground carelessly as he did. No point keeping up appearances when he was covered in blood. He felt a thrill of excitement at that thought. It felt sinful, walking in plain sight, painted with the blood of his prey.

It was good, then, that he was in exactly the right sort of place for that.

Will was standing in the river near the house, submerged up to his thighs as he cast the fishing line out. At the very least he still had his river. It was a large part of the reason he'd chosen his Wolf Trap house. There was a niggling in his gut then, something unsettled that he didn't think too deeply about. This was Hell, he was used to things being just different enough to throw him off but familiar enough to keep him calm. He exhaled slowly, letting the peace of the moment sink into his skin just as the cold pierced through his flesh. He ignored the sensation, fairly certain that he couldn't get sick in this weird Hell realm. Though to be fair, if this was Hell, getting sick was probably something that was still possible. Just to torture him more.

Will tried to clear his mind, focusing on the shifting light reflecting off the clear river water and the way the wind rustled through the trees. It smelled cold; if there was a way to describe it, Will would say it was like the way silk felt on the skin, the slight trembling bite of teeth on ice. It wasn't pleasant, but it was familiar, and Will was slowly finding that familiarity didn't denote comfort.

He was familiar with Molly, he was familiar with the house they lived in together, and the family they'd made. He was familiar with Wolf Trap. It was normal, it was predictable.

The storm behind his eyes screamed at the placid lifestyle he'd fallen into, it called out for someone to set him free, and he knew exactly who he was longing for. He clenched his jaw, his hands trembled on the fishing rod as he remembered Hannibal's dark eyes, the way he'd hungered. Will had not forgotten the way Hannibal watched him, coveted him. No, a large part of his issues in life had been Hannibal's obsession with him. But this place had a tendency to dull memories, and he had not been prepared for the fiery regard Hannibal still had for him, muted as it was in that brief space between waking and dreaming.

He licked his lips, and wondered how Hannibal's mouth would have felt against his. What would his skin taste like? Would it be warm? Or would it be cold? Cold like the way Hannibal regarded humans as his inferior, and cold like the bite of steel in Will's abdomen as he'd gasped and grasped.

When he licked into Hannibal's mouth, and traced the tips of Hannibal's teeth with his tongue, would he be able to feel the still beating lifeblood of those Hannibal had consumed? He shuddered, and Will hated that it wasn't from the cold. His face flushed, and he closed his eyes, imagining how the encounter could have gone differently if there hadn't been a barrier between them. He hated that invisible barrier, so much like the time when Hannibal had been under Alana's care, and they'd been separated by a wall of glass.

Even now, Will could feel traces of Hannibal around him, as if the very sight of Hannibal had changed Will irredeemably and he was tainted with the scent of the man. It was like the molecules in the air had adjusted, evolved into something darker, in a way that resounded with the beast laying dormant in his breast.

Will wondered yet again what he was fighting against. In life, there had been rules, morals built through centuries of philosophy. Here in Hell, he was only held accountable to himself. He hesitated, eyes opening halfway, staring absentmindedly into the distance as he heard the heavy breaths of the Ravenstag, and felt its feathered fur against his back.

Hannibal had always been his anchor, but he had also been the one to drown him. Much like the ocean, he was ruthless in the way he pushed and pulled at Will, shaping him into what he found beautiful. A stone polished by steadily flowing water, precious to Hannibal because it had assumed the shape *he* wanted. It should have angered him, knowing the man had clawed so deep into his skin, into his mind, but it only made him ache for more.

With Hannibal, he knew himself more than he'd ever known himself. It was as if the man sharpened his mind and senses. His presence prickled against Will's lizard brain, forcing him to pay attention, to watch and see that this was what a true predator was like.

Will knew without a doubt now that Hannibal loved him, or was as close to loving him as a monster could get. They had both hurt each other, almost to the point of no return, yet time and time again fate and circumstance brought them back together. Even in death, Will couldn't escape him.

So what then, was holding him back?

He paused, feeling a tugging on the fishing line. He quickly reeled it in, leaning back and using his weight as a counterpoint to drag the struggling fish out of the water. It felt like minutes but was probably only a few seconds before he caught the fish. He grinned, holding onto its squirming body as he waded through the water and dropped it into the bucked he'd prepared for this.

He'd only caught one so far, not having been out for long, so he decided to try and catch one more for dinner. Will sighed, wishing that Hannibal was here to prepare it for them. He would probably appreciate Will bringing the meat this time, even if it wasn't his meat of choice.

Will cast his line out again, falling into a contemplative silence as he pressed his lips together. The thought of meat brought to mind the fact that Hannibal wasn't just a serial killer, he was also a cannibal. It was something that should disgust Will. It probably should be somewhat of a deal breaker in terms of any sort of relationship with the man.

But the more Will thought about it, the more he realized that he simply didn't care. He remembered a conversation they'd had before, a tentative proposal to ignore the bad in order to enjoy the good in each other. He'd certainly taken it to heart. Hannibal had done so many things, all of them too twisted to even voice, and cannibalism was such a small part of it that it didn't even register to Will as a negative trait. It was just something that was uniquely Hannibal. To Will, the way Hannibal treated his victims was gruesome, but it made sense in a weird sort of way. Hannibal was already so other-worldly, eating those he deemed inferior only added to that appeal.

Will huffed out a disbelieving laugh. It was slowly dawning on him that all of Hannibal's quirks, whether they be murderous or simply prudish, were something that Will liked.

No, he *loved* them.

He loved the way Hannibal would pout a little when Will spoke to him particularly harshly. He loved the way he cooked with all the precision of a surgeon, the way he killed like one as well. He loved the way Hannibal made him feel grounded and content, like he was *enough*.

That Will Graham, dark murderous tendencies and all, was enough.

Not just enough, but desired. Hannibal wanted him just as he was, his true self without those pesky human limitations. It was true they'd tried to change each other, sometimes in lethal ways, but at its core Hannibal only wanted to unveil the darkness Will already possessed. To nourish it and bask in it. It was intoxicating, knowing that a man who held himself in such high regard also elevated Will to that same pedestal. They were equals, more now than they had ever been before.

And more than anything, he wanted to see what being equal meant. He wanted to finally let himself feel all those fucked up feelings he had for Hannibal. He wanted to set them free and let them consume him knowing that Hannibal felt the same, if not more.

Love wasn't an emotion he could truly attribute to what he felt for Hannibal. It was something deeper, a stirring in his soul that had lived its life yelling out, screaming for someone and only hearing its own voice echo back. When he met Hannibal, when he finally saw him, that was when the screaming had ceased. It was as if his very being knew that the man across from him was just as lonely. That perhaps they had lived their lives, screaming and crying out, hungering for the other half of them, wondering if there was anyone out there who could see the monster they were and not run the other way.

Will could see now, and he *hungered*.

As if on cue, the fishing line pulled taut, and Will was snapped out of his thoughts. He pulled at it, and grinned when it was another large trout. They would have a feast tonight. Hannibal would love it.

His grin dimmed, fingers growing cold when he realized it wasn't Hannibal he was going home to.

With a heavy heart, he placed the fish in the bucket. He looked back at the river and turned, sighing. He wasn't in the mood for fishing anymore. It would be better for him to go back early and think of another way out of here.

He wasn't sure how long he could last without Hannibal. He could only hope he would see him in his dreams tonight.

Hannibal wasn't one for giving up, but after several more hours of nothing, he realized following the dirt road was perhaps not the right method for leaving this place. He stood still, head cocked to the side as he considered his options. He could open up some of these doors, and see where they led, but it was likely that they were merely one way entryways to the depths of a person's Hell, and would not give him the answers he sought.

Hannibal glanced around, eyes dancing over the varying doors, stretching his senses for something that could help-

It wasn't often that Hannibal felt surprise, but his fingers twitched minutely when he saw a door he recognized. It was one that he knew distinctly, after all, it had been the start of Will's descent into darkness.

The Hobbs household door stood a few feet to his right, and Hannibal stalked over to it, walking around it in a circle with a critical eye. Very curious indeed. If he opened it, would he see Garrett Jacob Hobbs reliving his death over and over again? Or perhaps his Hell was an eternal loop of the moment he slit his daughter's throat. Regardless, it would certainly be interesting to see.

He paused just long enough to ponder on the dangers of entering someone's Hell before curiosity won. Hannibal opened the door and slipped inside. At first, it was too dark to see what was happening, but when his eyes adjusted, he realized he was in Hobbs' cabin.

"Use a steady hand, Abigail. We need to make sure not a single part is wasted."

Hannibal turned around, watching with avid interest at the sight of Hobbs standing behind Abigail, guiding her blade into the stomach of one of the missing girls. Abigail was placid, a certain detachment to her eyes that told Hannibal she was dissociating, likely trying to separate herself from the horrors of what she was doing.

"That's right, Abigail. I'm so proud of you."

Abigail allowed a watery smile at that, a single tear falling from broken blue eyes. She reminded him so much of Will in that moment, and Hannibal had meant to observe only, but he couldn't help stepping in. Her vulnerability drew him in like a moth to a flame. A flash of a memory, gold hair and cruel blue eyes whispered through his mind, and he wondered if Bedelia's proclivities guided his motivations now. She'd always leaned towards crushing the vulnerable, but never had the courage to participate. Hannibal had no such qualms. He wasn't sure if he wanted to make the situation worse or to stop it, but stepping in would sate his curiosity.

"Excuse me," Hannibal smoothly interrupted, the very picture of calm when Hobbs turned around with a deadly look in his eyes. The look on Hobbs face made the decision for him, he didn't appreciate being regarded as prey. It seemed he would play the role of the savior today. "I apologize for the interruption, but I do think your daughter would like to take a break now. She's had a long day."

"Who the hell are you?" Hobbs demanded as he took a step towards Hannibal, moving Abigail's blade into his own hands. Before Hannibal could respond, Abigail interrupted.

"H-Hannibal?" Her voice was a quiet whisper, her eyes darting nervously between her dad and Hannibal. She raised a hand to cover her mouth, a groan coming out. "No…you're not supposed to be here, this doesn't make sense…"

She whimpered, and it clicked for Hannibal then.

This wasn't Hobbs' Hell. This was Abigail's.

Abigail Hobbs was in Hell, and Hannibal had just unwittingly interrupted her torture.

“Interesting,” Hannibal mused, smile growing as he could feel the teacup coming back together again. Decision made, he turned to Hobbs. “It seems circumstance has brought us back to this moment.”

“What the-“ With one swift movement, Hannibal snapped Hobbs’ neck, deftly dodging the desperate swipe of his blade as he fell to the ground.

Abigail screamed, and Hannibal turned to her, his face pulled into a deceptively kind look, though the eager glint in his eyes gave him away. He reached a hand out and she flinched back, trembling.

“W-what’s happening? You just killed my dad…” She trailed off, tearing up as she backed away from him.

“Abigail, come here.”

The words seemed to trigger something in her and she moaned, a hand coming up to grasp her hair. “N-no, you’re going to kill me.”

“No, Abigail,” Hannibal soothed, stepping close enough to rest a palm on her shoulder. “That is no longer my goal. That was never my goal, you were merely a means to an end. And that end has been met. Now, this is a chance for us to glue the shattered teacup back again, to be a family.”

“You just killed my family,” Abigail whispered weakly, even as her eyes sharpened in recognition, Hannibal’s presence disrupting the hold Hell on her. “And you killed me.”

“Indeed, I did,” Hannibal agreed, a smile on his face. “Now, we can stay here with your father’s cooling body on the floor behind us, or we can leave now and discuss our plans for escaping Hell.”

“Leave?” Abigail questioned, her brows furrowing before they smoothed out in shock. “I’m in Hell?” She asked rather softly, looking sick.

Hannibal nodded, and she let out a morbid laugh. “Of course, and why wouldn’t I be? After all the things I did.” She looked up, eyes almost mischievous if it wasn’t for the slight hint of retribution in them. “And if I’m in Hell, it would make sense you would be here too.”

Hannibal shrugged, and when her words didn’t seem to garner much more of a response from him, her shoulders slumped. She grabbed his hand and took it off her shoulder, though she kept her grip on his fingers. Hannibal allowed it, and turned to the door of the cabin. He stepped forward, and led Abigail out the door as he spoke.

“Come, we have much to discuss, and Will will be very happy to hear from you.”

Chapter End Notes

What did you guys think? Hannibal has a companion now, and Will is finally accepting what he feels. Let's see where this will take them. Honestly I feel bad for the demons Hannibal is truly the most demonic of them all, even if he isn't one physically.

You can find the stunning graphic/gif edit by Dragon here on tumblr or retweet it here on Twitter. The title looks shattered!! I was so excited about that haha it's very cleverly done.

Thank you so much to those who have commented since the last chapter, it really warms my heart interacting with you guys. I hope to hear from more of you, my friends, and I hope you'll enjoy the rest of the story just as much. Please do let me know what you think ^-^

Also is anyone else gagging over Death Stranding's release I may have just blacked out and then when I was aware again I had dropped a hefty sum of money to purchase a copy of the game. Usually (because I'm broke af) I speculate and contemplate long and hard and wait for sales before I purchase a game but I am of the belief that Kojima used 99% of the budget to make Mads as freaking beautiful and realistic as possible and it shows. I had to have it I don't even know what the game is about tbh but I'm here for that sexy Mads. Please tell me I'm not alone in my thirst D:

You can find my tumblr here. I'm also active on Twitter and it'll be 99% Hannigram/Hannibal stuff so please check me out there! I'd love to get to know some of you.

A Reminder

Chapter Notes

Many apologies for the delay, the team had a bit of a busy day on all fronts.

Edit: This chapter is now beta-read by my lovely beta Nicks! Thank you as always <3

A big thank you to my artist jdragon122 who tried so hard to get this graphic done, we were both struggling with real life lol. I have...3 exams literally starting tomorrow RIP.

Regardless, happy reading!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

A Reminder
"Then what's the plan?"
"We send a message."

Dinner was a bit livelier than usual, Molly openly pleased by the fact that Will had caught them fish. When they sat down to eat, Will had offhandedly asked where Walter was, but Molly had said he'd eaten a large lunch and was resting in his room.

Will paused for a split second, mind going back to the darkness in the room he'd opened. He knew Molly was lying, but he wasn't sure what the rules of this place were. It was likely that if they realized he was starting to catch on to the irregularities of this place, they would take drastic measures to ensure he couldn't escape.

He diverted the conversation, letting it flow naturally as he stared at her. She still looked the same, but he knew this couldn't be Molly. Molly wasn't like him. She didn't have darkness in her, and when he'd left her last she'd been on the road to a speedy recovery. Nothing a little physical therapy couldn't help.

"I'm glad you're a little more happy," Molly smiled, carefully separating the bones of the fish from the juicy flesh. "I know this is all probably boring to you, compared to the exciting life you led before…"

Molly trailed off and Will swallowed his food before carefully placing his fork down next to his plate. He reached a hand across the small wooden table, and held her hand, a gesture of reassurance.

"Molly, I made my choice when I decided to marry you. Don't ever worry that you won't be enough," Will fought to keep the grimace off his face, the pang of guilt in his heart as Molly's face lit up with joy. It was true that if he was the Will from before the fall with Hannibal, he would have been content living his life with Molly. Maybe he would feel a little wistful here and there, wondering what could have happened if he'd decided to run away with Hannibal, but ultimately he would have been happy.

No killers in his brain, and no blood to blind his senses. It was the perfect docile lifestyle that would have kept the monster within him quiet until the day he died.

But after killing with Hannibal, after truly being himself for the first time in his life, the life he had with Molly dulled in comparison. Now, his senses lit up at the very mention of Hannibal, and his mouth watered with the taste of blood in his throat. He'd always said his life consisted of 'before Hannibal' and 'after Hannibal'. After Hannibal, he'd had Molly and Walter to give him that echoing sense of family, a void left behind by Hannibal.

He categorized his time now as 'with Hannibal'. They were no longer on different timelines, rather, they were conjoined and both felt more balanced because of it. It was ironic to Will, that dying with Hannibal was what finally made him feel alive.

His amusement must have shown on his face because Molly smiled back, mistaking his smile as another reassurance for her. She would never know that when he smiled now, it was tinged with the edges of cold death, of murder and the way the Dragon's blood had slid so easily through his fingers.

He was happy but not for the reasons she wanted. He was merely biding his time until Hannibal found him, until then, he would continue searching for a way out of here.

"I'm sure you're tired after a long day at work," Will frowned sympathetically, standing up and taking their finished plates to the sink. "Go wash-up and sleep. I'll take care of cleaning."

"Are you sure?" Molly asked, hesitantly, even as she glanced longingly at the stairs. "I can help."

"It's fine," Will smiled, this time genuine as he was reminded yet again of how kind Molly had been. "I'm going to stay up late working on my fly fishing tackles anyways. I might as well."

“Thanks, you’re the best,” Molly kissed the corner of his mouth, understanding without saying anything that Will didn’t want contact right now. Sometimes he just needed his space, and he was grateful Molly attributed his recent lack of physical affection as his usual quirk.

He allowed the kiss to happen, though part of him froze at the motion. He waited until she was upstairs before wiping quickly at where her lips had touched, his teeth bared in a grimace. He knew down to the very depths of his soul that he belonged to Hannibal. Nowadays, when someone else touched him, his instinct was to recoil.

Their touch wasn’t what he craved. Who he wanted was Hannibal, with his firm shoulder touches, and the way he’d cup Will’s face…

Will stared out the kitchen window, and watched as the Ravenstag met his gaze with steady, beady eyes, standing placidly at the edge of the forest.

“I know I hesitated,” Will whispered, knowing with absolute certainty that the Ravenstag could hear him. “But I’m not hesitating now. Seeing you again brought up memories, bad ones, but I don’t think I care anymore.”

Will tightened his grasp on the plate in his hands, the porcelain pressing cold against his skin.

“If you want me,” Will whispered, closing his eyes and breathing in the scent of feral darkness. “Come and get me.”

“You said you had a way of getting out of here?”

Hannibal darted his eyes to the side, taking in the determined stance of the young girl, the way she stared straight ahead and refused to meet his eyes. After the initial shock of stepping out of her personal Hell, Abigail had stayed silent, following Hannibal as he’d continued his journey to find Will.

“We are out of your Hell, are we not?” Hannibal smiled when his words brought out a rather frustrated huff from Abigail. He didn’t tolerate the rude, but he so did enjoy Abigail and Will’s impatient reactions.

“You said you were going to find a way out of here,” Abigail reminded, her blue eyes staring up into his for a split second before focusing on the ground again. Hannibal knew he made an intimidating sight. Despite his best efforts there was probably black blood covering his mouth and running down his chin to his throat. His white button up was absolutely unsalvageable and it irritated him, having to wear it in this dusty landscape. The dirt and grime seemed to enjoy sticking to him.

“Did I?” Hannibal asked, answering her with another question. Visibly annoyed now, Abigail stopped in her tracks and bit at her bottom lip, a nervous gesture.

“Yes, I wouldn’t have followed you otherwise. I think that getting me out of here is the least you can do since you’re the one that put me here in the first place.”

Hannibal narrowed his eyes at her, tilting his head in a way reminiscent to a predatory bird. He watched her tense, her survival instincts flaring up and screaming at her to back away, to run now before she was eaten alive.

“I may have been the one that cut short your time on Earth-“

“You mean you killed me,” Abigail muttered darkly, though she flinched at the flinty look in Hannibal’s eyes, peeved at the rude interruption.

“As I was saying, I may have been the one to kill you, as you so kindly put it, but I by no means am responsible for your afterlife. This,” Hannibal gestured at the wide expanse of Hell, dusted in red and covered with upright doors. “Is all your doing.”

Abigail tensed, mouth open and ready to spit out some scathing words when Hannibal raised his hand, cutting her off. “Do not argue with me, Abigail,” His tone wasn’t threatening, but Abigail saw the words for what they were, and she clenched her mouth shut, jaw twitching.

Hannibal smiled, pleased with his small victory. “You are here because of your own actions, and that is something you will have to accept. Now, whether or not you stay here is also up to you. Will you leave and try to find a way out by yourself, defenseless against any demon you should encounter, or will you come with me and find Will? Perhaps by the end of our journey we’ll find a way out of this place. Either way, you have much higher odds of survival if you follow me.”

“I followed you, once,” Abigail finally spoke after a long moment, her voice a hoarse whisper. “And you left me with a slit throat, cold on the kitchen floor.”

She looked up, eyes shining with unshed tears. “You took what my father couldn’t, and you did it all so you could hurt Will. Is that what this is? Am I your teacup recovered from the garbage disposal, glued together for one more use before discarding it again?”

Hannibal was silent then, a pang of something similar to regret forming his words. Abigail was visibly shaking, though her body was tense, as if she expected violence from him. It was smart of her to be on guard, but her words were bold. If it had been anyone else, Hannibal would have killed them for stepping out of line, but this was Abigail.

Before Will's betrayal, he had looked at her and seen Mischa reflected back. He had seen the potential of family. Now that she was back in his grasp, he was reluctant to let her go. Hannibal reached a hand out and she flinched back, hands coming up to claw at the hand he used to cup her cheek, whimpering. He pulled her close, holding her in a loose hug as she struggled before going limp.

"What are you doing?" Abigail whispered, her words pushed through gritted teeth and muffled by his chest.

"I'm hugging you," Hannibal answered, an amused lilt to his words as he pressed his lips to the top of Abigail's head, closing his eyes as he smelled her.

She'd always smelled like lilac and death, her presence the catalyst to the murder of at least seven young girls. She wasn't innocent by any means, but she also wasn't evil. She wasn't dark like Hannibal and Will was, her brand of defiance was still untainted. With time and effort, she could bloom into a stunning young woman, one that Hannibal and Will could proudly call their daughter. It was a fantasy, but one he'd held onto before Will had betrayed him.

"You have no reason to believe me, not after what had transpired that fateful night, but much has changed since then," Hannibal's voice was a low murmur, his words pressed into her dark hair. "Will and I…we've had our fair share of trials and tribulations. We've grown wary of fighting, and when we died, we had reached an understanding, one borne of blood and sacrifice."

Abigail pulled back at his words, and Hannibal squeezed her tightly one last time before allowing her to step back and look up at his eyes.

"Did you finally get what you wanted?" Abigail whispered, eyes dark with something curious.

"Yes," Hannibal breathed out, a satisfied smile on his lips as he recalled how alive Will had looked covered in the blood of their kill. "And it was beautiful."

Abigail studied him for a few moments more before she let out a huff of laughter, her hands coming up to cross against her chest, a mimicry of a hug as her nails dug into her arms. She seemed to have found what she was looking for in his answer, and Hannibal's smile grew gentle, glad they'd reached an understanding. Perhaps, this was the first step to fixing the teacup that had been broken long ago.

As if hearing his thoughts, Abigail jerked her head towards the road they'd been following.

"Come on, we don't want to keep Will waiting. Now that you've sunk your claws into him, I wouldn't be surprised if this time *he's* the one that goes on a murderous rampage trying to find you."

Hannibal let out a small chuckle at her words, heat pooling low in his abdomen as he licked his lips and imagined the fantasy her teasing words had invoked. It would certainly be a sight to behold, if Will felt passionately enough for him to kill through swathes of people, their bodies nothing but obstacles, just so he could get to Hannibal.

"One can only hope," Hannibal answered, walking next to her with a steady pace.

Abigail glanced at him before letting out a snort of laughter. "Of course you would like that, you two and your murder courting is enough to give anyone a headache."

Hannibal frowned at her words, eyes narrowing. "Murder courting is a rather tasteless term. I'm sure Will would agree."

"But it's no less true," Abigail paused, rolling over his words for a second. "So, you have a way of contacting Will then? Did he give you any clues as to where he could be?"

Hannibal shrugged, slightly discomfited by her question. "No, he was rather reluctant to reveal more details to me, last we spoke."

Abigail stopped in her tracks, and Hannibal paused as well, giving her a questioning raise of an eyebrow. She glared at him before crossing her arms. "Wait so, he doesn't *want* you to find him?"

"I assure you," Hannibal spoke with a steady pace, rather offended by her assumption. "He wants to reunite with me just as much as I long for him."

"Then why wouldn't he tell you?"

Hannibal sighed, gesturing for her to walk forward and she obeyed, though not without shooting a look at Hannibal.

"When I first became aware of where I was, I easily escaped my Hell and went searching for Will's. I had walked for quite a while before succumbing to exhaustion. Within my dreams, I met with Will and he..." Hannibal trailed off, eyes unfocused as he remembered the moment it had dawned on Will that he was real. The desperation Will had exhibited had been tantalizing, and to see such a passionate show of feelings from the usually subdued man had been a show of its own.

Hannibal felt a small tug on his sleeves, and met Abigail's questioning gaze, obviously asking him to continue his thought.

"I met Will and he was just as eager to reunite. He was unsettled and thus was more confrontational than usual, but he will be grateful to see us both again."

Abigail was silent, carefully working over Hannibal's words. "Is he-" Abigail licked her lips, glancing quickly at Hannibal before a hand subconsciously reached up to press at her neck. There wasn't a scar there, because her timeline in her Hell had been before the fallout and discovery of her father as a serial killer, but sometimes she felt echoes of pain flare up. “Is he okay? What’s his Hell like?”

Hannibal smiled, almost smug as his eyes shined with a certain possessiveness. “He is quite alright, physically speaking. He spends his days tending to his motor engine and living a normal life with Molly.”

“Is that a euphemism?” Abigail asked, perplexed. “Is that like code word for ‘Will is secretly being tortured’ or something?”

Hannibal let out a huff of laughter before shaking his head. “No, his Hell is one of normality. He’s told me it bores him, and that he wishes to be free of it.”

“Oh,” Abigail’s voice was soft, and Hannibal glanced at her out of the corner of his eyes, curious at her longing tone. “If it was me…that would be my heaven. Just a normal life where I’m a normal girl. Where I have a normal mom and dad, and not one that wants to kill me so badly he has to hurt other people to hold himself back.”

“You would have faded away in a setting as banal as that,” Hannibal spoke up, his hand reaching out to squeeze her shoulder in a comforting gesture. “You are all the more brilliant covered in blood with death in your lungs.”

Abigail bared her teeth at him, and Hannibal couldn’t help the way he stared, fascinated by the young monster that stared back. “That’s what *you* want, not me. I would have been more than happy living a normal life,” She paused, and when she spoke there was a glint in her eyes that made Hannibal stiffen. “In fact, I’m not even sure if Will wants to leave his Hell. Truth be told, it doesn’t even seem that bad. Maybe when you spoke to him, you only heard what you wanted to hear, and disregarded his true feelings on the situation. It wouldn’t be the first time you did that.”

Abigail pulled back out of his reach as her last sentence left her mouth, eyes widening in fear as she realized that might have crossed a line. She froze, heart thumping hard enough to feel in her throat as Hannibal stared just over her shoulder, face alarmingly blank and tense.

“Perhaps you are right, Abigail.”

Abigail felt her mouth drop open in shock, eyebrows scrunching up in confusion at the soft words. It was almost resigned, in a way that someone like Hannibal should never feel.

“Will was outside of my influence for over three years. In that space of time, he changed, as have I. We are more different now than we ever were before, and our one moment of consummation doesn’t forgive the entirety of our history together.”

Abigail hesitated for a long minute before sighing. She stepped forward and brushed Hannibal’s bangs out of his face, forcing him to meet her gaze. She cupped his stubbled cheek in a mimicry of the gesture she knew he liked to bestow on Will, one of affection and a dark sort of possessiveness.

“I’m sorry,” She started, letting the words flow out of her as she stared up at his blank stare, certain that underneath his person suit he was staring back and needing the reassurance. “What I said wasn’t true.”

Hannibal paused before reaching a hand up to clasp her’s, pressing her fingers tighter against his face.

“And why is that, Abigail?” His words were a whisper against her palm, and she smiled.

“Because I know that no matter how much you two have changed, it doesn’t alter the core of you. It doesn’t change what makes you Hannibal. And as long as you are Hannibal, Will Graham will never stop aching for you.”

Hannibal was, for the first time in years, at a loss for words. He let her words sink in, knowing in the depths of his being that they rang true. He smiled, pulling back and giving her head an affectionate pat.

“You’ve grown wise, Abigail. Hell has changed you for the better.”

Abigail scoffed, a playful smile on her lips as she darted out from under his touch, steps light as she moved forward. “I haven’t changed much, it’s just that now I can see.”

Hannibal followed, content with letting her lead, fascinated by how she had developed outside of his reach. “And what do you see Abigail?”

She glanced at him then, the mirth in her eyes fading into a serious expression. “When I see you and Will, I don’t see two people. I see one being, separated by the world and the physical space between your bodies.”

“Fascinating,” Hannibal murmured, eyes bright with pride.

“Do you know what else I see?”

Hannibal inclined his head, an indication of his desire to hear more.

“I see the way Will looks at you and it isn’t gentle or loving. When he looks at you it’s with all the feral madness of an old god, and what he sees is something that is *his*,” Abigail stared at him, a wisdom that wasn’t there before deepening her blue eyes until they were almost black in color. “You look at him the same way, and that’s why I know that no matter what, Will wants this reunion just as much as you do. Even if it hurts him,” She paused, a flicker of understanding on her face. “Especially if it hurts him.”

Hannibal swallowed down the lump of longing that was unearthed by her words, his hunger for Will almost choking him in its intensity. His words were a low growl, anticipation licking through his veins as they moved forward. “Then let’s make sure we find Will.”

Abigail nodded, and when she grinned at him, he met her with an almost savage smile. His person suit was a mere thin veil at that point, and he watched with glee as she saw the monster underneath and didn’t look away.

They walked for what felt like several hours more before something rose in the distance. It wasn't until they got closer that they realized it was a town of some sort. The buildings were made of the same dirt as the terrain, mud houses that had strings of different wares hanging from them. It was a bustling market town, and both were wary of getting closer.

"They don't look like demons…" Abigail muttered as they stared out at the town from behind the rather wide door placed a good hundred feet away.

"And what did you think demons would look like?" Hannibal questioned, rather amused.

Abigail shrugged, chewing at her bottom lip. "I don't know, horns and tails maybe? Besides their weird clothes, they just look human."

"Not entirely human, their blood is black."

Abigail eyed Hannibal, taking in his generally disheveled appearance. "That explains the black sludge on you."

"I was wondering when you would ask," Hannibal admitted, a smile playing on his lips.

"I wasn't going to," Abigail sighed as she stared out at the town. "We kind of had more pressing matters."

"Of course," Hannibal nodded in agreement. "But now we need to gather the information we need, and we have a whole town of demons to speak to. Where would you like to start first?"

"You want us to just walk in there and start demanding answers?" Abigail did a double take, leaning back far enough that she almost stepped out from behind the door. "That seems like a really bad idea."

"No, Abigail," Hannibal corrected patiently, a calculated look on his face. "You will walk into the town and ask questions."

“You want me to go in there alone,” It wasn’t a question, and Abigail’s voice was flat in disbelief as she glared at him. “I’m here to escape, not die a second time.”

“I assure you Abigail, you will be in no danger,” Hannibal gestured to her clothes, the coat covering most of her body and the jeans she wore. “Despite what you may believe, I think that you blend in perfectly with them. Your clothing is not too different from theirs and as long as you are discrete, you should be able to procure the information we need.”

Abigail fidgeted, her fingers twisting into the edges of her coat as she darted fearful eyes around. “I don’t think-“

“Abigail,” Hannibal rested his hands on her shoulder, forcing her to look up into his dark eyes. “This is what you trained for, remember? Just breathe, and lure them in. You’re a good fisherman when you want to be.”

Her fists clenched into her coat, and she felt herself slipping into that calm mindset, the friendly persona she’d forced herself to maintain as she’d lured each young girl to their death. Finally, she stepped back, out of his reach, her gaze unreadable. “I hope you know what you’re doing.”

Hannibal didn’t respond, merely watching her as she strode into the town with a false ease to her shoulders. Garrett Jacob Hobbs may have been a monster, but he had raised one as well, and he had not left her defenseless. Hannibal felt pride well in his chest then, stealthily moving closer to the town under the cover of the various doors. He watched Abigail casually chat with a stall owner, smiling and laughing, and he wondered if this was what Hobbs had felt for his daughter.

He wondered if this was what Will had felt for Abigail, when his brain had burned and merged with Hobbs all those years ago.

Hannibal waited patiently, keeping an eye on the young girl as she flitted from stall to stall, keeping up a steady rhythm as to appear unsuspicious. When she had exhausted all her options, she circled back and walked out, taking a roundabout way back to the door Hannibal stood behind.

“Well?” Hannibal asked, eager to hear that they were one step closer to Will. His face fell when his question was met with a frown, Abigail’s arms coming up to hug at her chest, clearly concerned about the fact that she’d failed in her task.

“I couldn’t get anything. They were pretty friendly but no one had heard of Will. They said that all of the human souls here are placed into their rooms by the royal guard.”

Hannibal raised an eyebrow at that, fascinated. “There’s a hierarchy here?”

“Yes,” Abigail hesitated before looking up at Hannibal, a fear in her eyes that seemed to war with her disbelief. “They say that the person in charge is the Devil.”

Hannibal was silent, and Abigail laughed nervously, filling the stunned air between them with her chatter. “The Devil! Can you believe it? I mean, that can’t be true right?”

She seemed to be begging him to agree with her, but when Hannibal answered, it wasn’t the words she wanted to hear. “It would make sense, wouldn’t it? We’ve heard tales of the Devil, enough that an idea of it exists in the mortal realm.”

“But Hannibal,” Abigail’s voice shook, and Hannibal reached out a hand to clasp hers, steadying her. “If there’s a Devil watching this whole place, then how are we going to get out?”

“Simple, my dear Abigail.”

Abigail looked up at him, hope flaring in her eyes despite the desperation in her grasp, her nails digging into Hannibal’s hand.

“If there is a greater being watching this place, then all we need to do is kill them,” Hannibal tilted his head then, an almost reptilian regard in his eyes, the red eclipsed by black as Hannibal tasted the idea of killing the Devil on his tongue.

And God help them, when Hannibal said it as if it was such a simple task, merely an inevitability rather than an impossibility, she could believe in his words. Abigail squeezed Hannibal’s hand once before letting go, her eyes straying back to the lively town.

“Then what’s the plan?”

Hannibal followed her gaze, licking his lips as his eyes darkened in anticipation.

“We send a message.”

Chapter End Notes

Whelp, hope you guys liked this one :) Not much Will in this but that's because Hannibal is about to start some shit lol. All will be answered in due time ;) We learn a bit more about the workings of Hell here and the hierarchy. Who's ready to face the Devil lmao I hope you guys are enjoying the Abigail Hannibal interactions ahhhh

You can find the sexy graphic edit by Dragon here on tumblr or retweet it here on Twitter. Honestly that's the sexiest pic I've ever seen of Mads hnnnng

Thank you to those who commented last chapter, I was thinking about you guys when I was struggling to get this chapter out and it was only my drive to not disappoint ya'll that helped me pull through. Thank you, truly. To readers new and old, please do leave a comment if you enjoyed. I don't bite xD I appreciate your feedback so far <3

You can find my tumblr here. I'm also active on Twitter and it'll be 99% Hannigram/Hannibal stuff so please check me out there! I'd love to get to know some of you.

A Plan

Chapter Notes

> My finals are in two days ahhahahaha anyways hysteria aside, here's the next chapter. Things are getting wildddd so please enjoy thank you.
>
> Many thanks to my lovely beta who is super busy and still took the time to look over everything ;-; Thank you Nicks you're the best!
>
> The amazing graphic is once again done by my tenacious artist jdragon122 who keeps me sane.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

When Will opened his eyes to a familiar room, fireplace crackling and his body comfortably situated in his usual chair, he felt a relieved smile spread across his face.

“You seem content, Will. What has you so delighted?”

Will turned his gaze away from the fireplace, the word ‘you’ on the tip of his tongue filled with affection for the man he’d decided would be his present and his future. Instead, he quickly shot up to his feet, mind barely catching up with his actions as he tried to step forward but was stopped by the barrier between them. His hands brushed the air as his mouth opened, then closed.

“What the hell happened to you?” Will finally asked, eyes roving over the blackened liquid that covered Hannibal so completely. The color was black, but the consistency reminded him of blood. His eyes darted back up, and when they met Hannibal’s, it was the white gaze of the Wendigo that stared back, his skin dark as night and antlers towering over his head.

With a startled blink, the vision faded away, and what was left was Hannibal, standing up rather casually as he walked over and placed a palm against the barrier in a mirror of Will’s posture.

“Curious, isn’t it?” Hannibal murmured, glancing down at himself in distaste before stepping back and gesturing at Will to do the same. He sat, and Will followed as well, weight slumping into the chair in exhaustion. Hannibal’s appearance had given him a heart attack. It really looked like he’d been hurt…

“Hannibal,” Will’s voice was rough, and the warning tone caused Hannibal to quirk his mouth up in amusement. Will didn’t have time for his games, he wanted to know what Hannibal had gotten himself into.

“The results of my actions follow me in my dreams. A rather fascinating logic. It allows for many assumptions, such as the theory that in Hell we are merely souls without a physical body, so my dreams would reflect the state of my soul.”

Will clenched his jaw, moving it in a tense motion before forcing himself to relax. “Did you make a mess?”

“Ah,” Hannibal’s eyes glinted then, a smirk on his lips that looked particularly self-satisfied. “Often times, a mess is something out of our control, a word with negative implications and the promise of a tedious aftermath. This, my dear Will, was no mess. It was a message, a beautiful one that I’m sure you would have appreciated in all its glory.”

“That’s rather self-serving, don’t you think, Doctor?” Will stared hard, taking in the whites of Hannibal’s teeth, looking particularly sharp compared to the dark liquid covering him. “What did you do?”

“It would seem that demons exist,” Will leaned forward at those words, mouth dropping open soundlessly. “And that they bleed black.”

“You-“ Will ran a hand down his stubbled cheeks, a laughter of disbelief falling from his mouth. “You killed a demon? Of fucking course you did. Why wouldn’t you?”

“Indeed, if it can bleed, it can be killed. And this was no challenge, Will.” Hannibal leaned back, crossing his legs with a small smile. “We came across a town. A market of sorts, bustling with demons.”

Will stiffened, eyes widening as he felt a shudder run down his spine. Hannibal noticed his tense posture and his eyes turned hungry, devouring Will’s reaction like a particularly delectable treat.

“You killed them all.”

It was a whisper, and not a question, because Will knew the answer. It was reflected in the copious amounts of blood covering every inch of Hannibal, and it was highlighted in the savage grace that Hannibal wore like a suit, the violence changing his person suit into one much more suitable for the setting they were in.

“Yes,” Hannibal’s smile turned into a smirk, his tongue darting out to lick at the flaking blood tainting his lips. “They tasted exquisite.” Hannibal paused, his eyes bright with pride, crinkling at the corners. “It is said that Achilles killed twelve high-born youths as a sacrifice besides Patroclus’s funeral pyre. Alexander the Great also saw beauty in these offerings and massacred the Cossaean tribe as a tribute to the one he held dear, Hephaestion. In that sense, what I am doing is much the same.”

Will had to close his eyes at that, the image behind his eyelids one of gluttony and a deep gnawing sense of hunger. The reality that no matter how much he gorged himself, there would never be enough to fill the pit in his soul. Knowing what Hannibal did and seeing the aftermath of it was breathtaking in its intensity. He knew that he should feel horrified, but

Hannibal’s actions only made his breath quicken, his tongue flick out to lick his dry lips. And what did it say about him that all he felt was desire?

Hannibal’s words registered in his mind then, and his brows furrowed, mouth dropping open in a confused puff of breath as he opened his eyes. “Wait, we?”

Hannibal’s smile softened, something almost fragile in his eyes, the laugh lines stretching at the corners. “Yes,” Hannibal replied in a whisper, his gaze holding Will’s, gauging his reaction. “I found Abigail.”

Of all the people Will suspected Hannibal may have encountered, Abigail was not one of them. He reared back, absolutely floored, his hand coming up to press against his mouth, as if holding back a scream.

Will shook his head, his breathing increasing as he clenched his hands into fists and pressed them against his thighs, relishing the clarity that the pain brought him. “It can’t be.”

“Will-“

“*Hannibal*,” Will snarled, voice barely recognizable as he shot to his feet and stepped forward in a menacing manner. His nails dug into the palms of his hands, and he took a deep breath before forcing himself to relax, hating the fact that the only expression on Hannibal’s face was one of curiosity. “If she’s here then it is by *your* hand.”

Hannibal quirked an eyebrow at that, tilting his head. “Need I remind you that actions have consequences, and Abigail’s position in the afterlife is due to her own choices.”

“It doesn’t matter,” Will shook his head, refusing to listen even as he felt a pre-emptive wave of grief wash over him. He had forgiven Hannibal, but he had never forgotten the way Abigail had choked on her own blood. He had not forgotten the way she’d looked, eyes blank with shock and resignation, forever unable to escape her fate. It haunted him for years after that night, and the only thing that had kept him going was the belief that she had left this world for a better place. “Hell may have been an inevitability for her, but her death was not. She could have lived countless more years, happy and safe.”

The silent ‘if it wasn’t because of you’ remained unspoken between them but Hannibal saw it in the way Will clenched his jaw, biting down harsh words and the desire to lash out.

“Be that as it may, her presence here now can be seen as a sort of serendipitous coincidence.”

Will bared his teeth, feeling restless as he paced back and forth in front of the barrier, eyes focused on the floor and refusing to look at Hannibal. He feared if he did, he might throw himself at the man and try to rip his throat out.

Hannibal tracked his motions, following the path Will took as he paced. His voice was soft, almost hesitant when he finally spoke. “We can be a family again, Will. The teacup shattered but we have been given a second chance.”

“I don’t care about your fucking teacup!” Will yelled, barely containing his voice as he flashed fiery eyes at Hannibal. “She was our daughter, Hannibal, and *you killed her*. There’s no going back from that no matter how much you want to.”

Hannibal stayed silent, fingers clasped tightly in his lap. “You said so yourself, all has been forgiven between us. Yet your reaction tells me that was merely a lie to placate me.”

Will took in a deep breath, stopping in his tracks as he pushed his shoulders back and stretched the tense muscles. He licked his lips, a pause, as he tried to gather himself. “It wasn’t a lie,” Will muttered, dropping down into the chair with a heavy sigh. “But knowing that she’s here and that you’re with her again-“

“It brings up bad memories, ones you do not wish to repeat again.” Hannibal murmured, understanding in his eyes as he leaned back, posture open and purposefully unthreatening. “I assure you, I have every intention of keeping Abigail safe.”

Will didn’t answer for a long moment, staring into the fireplace as he calmed his mind. Finally, he met Hannibal’s gaze, his own dark with retribution and hellfire. “Promise me that you’ll keep her safe. That you won’t hurt her.”

Hannibal didn’t hesitate, his voice soft as he inclined his head. “I promise. She is family, Will, as are you.”

Hannibal always kept his promises, and his words settled Will, giving him a sense of security he didn’t know he’d needed. “I hope you know what you’re doing,” Will murmured, slumping into the chair as he ran a barely steady hand through his curls. “How does Abigail feel about all this?”

“She is rather complacent, all things considered. I believe her desire to survive far outweighs any lingering animosity between us.”

Will nodded, less concerned about Abigail seeking revenge than he was that Hannibal was coercing Abigail into going with him on his journey through Hell. “What’s your plan then?”

Hannibal straightened at that, his veil lifting almost completely as he lounged with all the grace of a predator. “It appears there is a hierarchy within Hell, one not dissimilar to tales from the land of the living.”

Will raised a brow at that, his voice almost mocking as he spoke. “You’re telling me there’s a Devil here?”

“Precisely.”

“Wait what?” Will leaned in, hands tightening on the arms of the chair as he chuckled in disbelief. “Seriously?”

“It appears so,” Hannibal replied, looking entirely unbothered as Will felt himself having a bit of an existential crisis over the fact that apparently fucking Lucifer is a real thing and that this being was in charge of Hell. “Fortunately, we’ve been informed that the royal guard are the ones tasked with sequestering each soul into their designated Hell room. If we capture a few of them, it shouldn't be long before we find yours."

"Christ," Will coughed into his hand, more a choked laugh than a real cough as he leaned his head back, staring blankly at the ceiling. "There's even a royal guard."

They fell into a comfortable silence, both lost in their own thoughts as Will digested this life changing information. Finally, he tilted his head back down, eyes narrowing at the relaxed demeanor Hannibal wore. "So your plan is to ask around until you find me? Then what?"

"Then we leave," Hannibal replied, barely phased by his questioning, as if their escape was easy as pie.

"How?" Will quirked his lips to the side in a sardonic smile. "We just walk up to the Devil and go 'hey we know we're here because we were evil when we were alive, but would you let us out please?' I'm sure that would go over really well with the almighty being watching this place."

Hannibal made a 'tsk' sound, a fond smile on his lips. "You lack imagination, dear Will. It is said that God cast down Lucifer from heaven, a punishment for his transgressions, and are we not made in the image of God? If God can cast Lucifer down to Hell, then we can certainly cast him out."

Will stared at Hannibal, mouth agape as it was slowly dawning on him just how far the man's arrogance and self confidence went. "You can't just kill the Devil!"

"Oh but indeed I can," Hannibal replied, as placid as always, even as there was a hint of teeth in his smile. "It would certainly prove to be a challenge, but I am nothing if not persistent. Once the Devil is dead, then I would be the rightful ruler of Hell, and that should help us procure proper housing for our family."

"I'm not sure this is going to work out how you want it to," Will said rather dubiously, mind running over the possibility of Hannibal killing the Devil. It seemed impossible but Hannibal had always seemed so invincible, killing the Devil didn't seem like much of a stretch.

Hannibal nodded, eyes distant as he planned. "There is of course, a possibility that there is no way to leave this place. If that proves to be true, we merely need to make sure our accommodations are adequate and create our home here."

"And you would be providing us those accommodations," Will responded weakly, not sure if it was a question of a statement. "Because you would be the new head honcho."

"I prefer the term 'ruler' or perhaps 'king' but your words will suffice," Hannibal sniffed rather disdainfully, and Will couldn't help the burst of genuine laughter he let out at that, absolutely gone on this crazy cannibal.

"You're fucking insane," Will finally said, once he'd calmed down. He traced the wrinkles at the corner of Hannibal's mouth with his eyes, loving the way the gentle smile looked on him. He wished he could taste it. "But God help me, I believe you can do it."

Hannibal’s eyes glinted, almost playful as he tilted his head. “Better the devil you know, as they say.”

Will held in his laugh at that, teeth pressed together painfully as he smiled. “You’re incorrigible.”

“That’s precisely why you ache for me, Will.”

Hannibal’s words were met with a soft look, Will’s eyes serious as his smile slowly left his face. He knew the ache in his heart was one mired in the depths of his love for Hannibal. Love wasn’t a word that he thought he’d ever assign to the burning in his chest, the way Hannibal’s voice took over his mind until not a single part of him wasn’t touched by the man’s presence. Love was too genial, too pure for what they had together. But in that moment, surrounded by the quiet of their dreams and cast in the shadows of flickering firelight, Will could admit that it was the closest word he would use to describe his and Hannibal’s relationship. They didn’t love each other in the conventional sense, and their love was certainly destructive, but it was *them*, and it was enough. They stared at each other, and when Will finally spoke, his voice was hoarse with emotion.

“Yeah, I guess I do.”

When Will woke up this time, it was with even breaths and a calm heart. His last few moments with Hannibal had been spent in comfortable silence, the two taking nourishment from the sight of the other. It reminded him of the more peaceful times he’d spent with Hannibal in his office, before he’d known Hannibal was a monster, and that they were identically different.

He wouldn’t change his current relationship with Hannibal, no matter the consequences that had transpired and the lives lost. They were equals now, and he was loathe to change that in any way.

He turned onto his back, intent on getting a few more minutes of sleep when he felt a stabbing pain. Will shot up, hands scrambling as he pressed fingers against his spine, remembering vividly the hallucinations he'd suffered when he was sick, of antlers growing out of fragile skin and piercing through his person suit.

"Is something wrong?" Molly's voice wasn't particularly alarmed, her hands coming up to rub at her eyes as she blinked up at Will. "Another nightmare?"

"No, it's just…" Will scratched at his back, and Molly turned him until his back was facing her. She was silent for a long moment before speaking up.

"Is your back hurting? There doesn't seem to be anything wrong."

Will let out the breath he didn't know he'd been holding, his heart settling back into a steady rhythm as he grimaced. "I think I might have just twisted a muscle. Should be fine."

"Sure you don't want to go to the doctor?" Molly asked, and Will turned until he was facing her. Her brows were furrowed, a small frown on her face as she bit at her bottom lip.

"Yeah it's fine, Molly," Will soothed, sighing as he laid back down. Despite his reassurances, he made sure to sleep on his side, wary of triggering that intense pain again.

"Alright if you're sure…" Molly trailed off and Will could hear her breathing even out, obviously exhausted from constantly being awakened by his nightmares. The only issue was that this time it wasn't a nightmare that had disturbed them, it was a physical issue. Will scowled, hand reaching behind him to drag gently across his shoulder blades. Well, as physical as this place could get, he supposed.

Will slipped back into sleep then, knowing that this time he wouldn't see Hannibal, the man likely awake wherever he was now. Still, he made a mental note to ask Hannibal about the pain when he saw him next. Will felt a smile slip onto his face, and he let the fond warmth spread in his chest. Hannibal did like playing doctor, and he always enjoyed the doctor's hands on him…

Will pressed his face into his pillow, hiding his flush and biting back a groan. It was frustrating that they couldn't touch each other in their dreams, but hopefully soon that would be rectified.

His mind wandered back to his discussion with Hannibal and he felt his heart grow heavy. It had pleased him somewhat to hear that he would be able to see Abigail again, but at the same time he felt sorrow at the thought of the girl suffering in Hell all these years. What worried Will the most was that Hannibal was likely to tear apart everything and everyone to get to him. And though it was rather flattering in a macabre way, it was also a dangerous risk for Hannibal and Abigail. The more violence they faced, the higher the chance of them not coming out the other side intact. They couldn't always win every fight.

Will resolved himself to look harder for a way out of his Hell. If he could get out by himself, then he could probably meet them halfway and save everyone a lot of trouble. He dozed off, mind going back to Walter's room. He would have to investigate it thoroughly and hopefully get himself out of this hellhole.

"Abigail."

Abigail looked up from where she'd been sitting against a wall, knees scrunched up and arms wrapped around them. There were specks of black blood all over her, but she was practically spotless compared to Hannibal. Hannibal was drenched head to toe in darkness, and he looked even more inhumane because of it.

"Hannibal," Abigail spoke up in a tired whisper, her eyes darting over the mess they'd made of the place and the bodies they'd left. "That was a quick nap."

Hannibal inclined his head, moving until he was standing next to her. He surveyed the town, rather proud of the scenes he'd set up. Each demon was decapitated, their bodies positioned in domestic motion within the houses. Some were sitting at dinner tables, holding cutlery, others were sitting on chairs, holding a book and reading it. On the perimeter of the entire town, Hannibal had taken their spears and erected a wall of heads, each spear a spike perfect for mounting his prey.

It was gorgeous, and Hannibal regretted the fact that Will wasn't here to witness it. He would have settled for a sketchbook at least, so he could draw it and show Will later, but none of the houses had yielded anything of the sort. It was a pity, as this was one of the largest canvases he'd had the pleasure to work on, and he'd made sure to take full advantage of the space he had to display his art.

"Did you talk to Will?"

"I did," Hannibal smiled, the blood on his face cracking as his face shifted. He would have to wash off the darkness that covered him, but for now he relished in the sensation. "He anticipates our reunion just as much as we do."

Abigail was silent for a long moment, and when Hannibal looked down at her, she was staring off into the distance, fingers pressed into her knees. “I don’t know if I want to see Will again.”

Hannibal tilted his head, curious. “And why is that?”

“He was the last person to believe in the good in me, and he tried to protect me even when he found out what I was…” Abigail ran a hand through her hair, tugging strands out of the braid she’d worn so as to lessen the amount of blood on it.

“He reminds you of the person you wanted to be,” Hannibal stated, understanding in his voice as he stared out at the town they’d murdered, now eerily silent. It had been a risky plan, but it had mostly involved Abigail luring demons out, one by one or sometimes in small groups for Hannibal to dispose of. It wasn’t until a lot of the demons had went missing that they started to catch on. From there, they had silently blended into the town, wearing the clothes of the demons, and killed everyone as discreetly as possible.

Hannibal could tell it was the first time she’d actively participated in a kill. Perhaps with her father she had only been the lure, and from her Hell room, it would seem he had also forced her to participate in the post-mortem gutting. Despite that, she had performed beautifully, almost instinctively as she’d stuck close to Hannibal and aided in his kills.

He felt a sort of pride well in his chest, an emotion he attributed to his fatherly regard for her, that she was his charge just as much as Mischa was. It certainly helped that these demons were not human, and so she had treated them as such, each kill coming a little easier to her as she grew used to the motions.

“Do you think it’s too late for me?” Abigail whispered, voice small as she ducked her head into her arms.

Hannibal mulled over her words for a few seconds before holding her hand and lightly pulling her up. She went reluctantly, eyes focused on a spot on Hannibal’s armored chest as she bit at her bottom lip. “I believe that you are exactly who you were meant to be.”

“And what is that?” Abigail asked, looking up and eyes shining with unshed tears. “A monster?”

“No,” Hannibal replied, voice soft as he tucked a piece of loose hair behind Abigail’s ear, noting with some pleasure that she had both in this realm. “A predator rising from the muck, after spending eternity cowering as prey.”

Abigail let the words sink in, her eyes sharpened in awareness as she stepped back. “And that is what I need to be, to survive.”

“It is what you need to truly feel alive.”

They stared at each other for a moment longer before Abigail gave him a jerky nod. Hannibal smiled, letting her hand go and stepping back with a small gesture towards one of the houses.

“Come, it is rather uncomfortable to be covered in blood, and I’m sure we could both benefit from a shower.”

Abigail followed him, and Hannibal scanned the area, finding one or two of the bodies that were closest to their size. He would have to exchange their current bloodied clothing with the cleaner robed armor, though the clothes still had blood on them from the beheading of its owner.

After a quick clean up, noting with some relief that Hell did indeed have showers, they were both dressed and ready to go.

Hannibal wore a rather dark robed armor, the black and red combination allowing him to hide the blood that was still on the clothes. Abigail’s was lighter, one meant for travel and not for protection. It was an aqua blue, the robes matching well with her eyes. Hannibal took pride in dressing what was his, and if Abigail was to be his and Will’s daughter, she would need to dress accordingly.

Not that Will would ever listen to Hannibal if he tried to dress him. Hannibal had a distinct feeling they would have plenty of disagreements over his preferred attire of plaid and jeans, and he looked forward to those interactions.

He would give anything to have Will in front of him, arguing about clothing choices.

Hannibal sighed, and Abigail darted her eyes up at him, adjusting the dragon scale cuffs on her sleeves as she did so. “Don’t worry, we’ll find him.”

Hannibal smiled, though it was stretched rather thin and held a hint of exhaustion. “I sincerely hope we do, Abigail.”

They headed out, grabbing whatever supplies they needed. Abigail didn’t comment when Hannibal packed his sack with pieces of meat he’d taken from the demons. He also took whichever spices were available, though a majority of them were rather foreign and he looked forward to trying them.

Abigail was restless as they walked out of the town, her eyes staring straight forward and not straying from the path. Hannibal glanced at her before turning his head back to admire his art one last time. This wasn’t a subtle masterpiece. It was painted with large brushstrokes, and announced a warning to all who could see.

“Do you think this was a good idea?” Abigail finally blurted out, her hands clasped in front of her, fingers tight with tension.

Hannibal chuckled, his voice low as they moved forward. “The practice of placing heads on pikes was first used during the late Roman republic, where Gaius Marius and his troops displayed the severed heads of their political enemies on the Rostra. It is an ancient practice, and one with a universal message: we are more powerful than they can anticipate, and we are coming for them next. We are merely expediting our journey, it is likely that this message will soon reach the Devil’s lair and they will send their guards after us.”

“And so that saves us the trip of hunting them down and dealing with large groups of them at the palace.” Abigail murmured, eyes alight with understanding as she saw the fishing reel before her eyes, the bait now cast.

“Precisely. No matter how strong we are, Abigail, it would not be wise to take on an entire palace of guards. Our message has been sent, and they should come to us soon. Of course, we will give them a warm welcome.” Hannibal smiled, a glint of sharp teeth as he tilted his head up, basking in the light around them.

Abigail was quiet. It was easy to forget the monster that Hannibal was, underneath his polite demeanor and kind words. But here, surrounded by the gagging scent of blood and illuminated by the light of Hell, Hannibal had never looked so alive. He was comfortable, his posture relaxed and almost cheerful as he walked.

Abigail shuddered, and hoped that this time, she would survive.

Chapter End Notes

Alright ya'll, next chapter is when half of the ongoing mystery is revealed. I honestly forgot how fast it goes from here but wow we're already at chapter 8 guys. This is honestly one of my personal faves because of the Hannigram interaction and the Abigail and Hannibal one. They're so cute when they're talking about killing people/murdering entire towns. Only 5 chapters left! And the last chapter is honestly almost like an epilogue so it's relatively short.

I'm taking bets on what's going to happen next, will they get Will out? Will they kill the Devil? Do I, the writer, even know what is going on???? Only time will tell x'D The murder husbands are kind of wild cards. If you liked it, please leave me a comment! I'd love to see what you guys think. Thank you so much for coming with me on this journey so far. We also have an important announcement next chapter so I'm excited about that ahhhh.

You can find this sick ass (vaguely festive colored) graphic by Dragon here on tumblr or retweet it here on Twitter.

You can find my tumblr here. I'm also active on Twitter and it'll be 99% Hannigram/Hannibal stuff so please check me out there! I'd love to get to know some of you.

A Divide

Chapter Notes

You guys haha I'm so excited for this chapter! I hope this was worth the wait. It's been quite difficult for me to be on schedule but I am nothing if not determined and I really really wanted to show you guys this chapter :D

As always, this chapter is beta-ed by my lovely friend Nicks! Many thanks my dude <3

The amazing graphic is by my bestie jdragon122 who works some serious magic with these chapter headers. You can find this stunning cracked glass graphic by Dragon here on tumblr or retweet it here on Twitter.

ALSO THERE IS A BIG ANNOUNCEMENT AT THE END. PLEASE CHECK END NOTES!!!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

A Divide
"You are not
the beginning I envisioned,
But you are the ending
I deserved."

Will was tinkering with his motor engine when he paused, noting the distinct sound of Molly starting up the car and driving off before he set down his tools. He looked down at his dogs, letting out a sigh as he ran a nervous hand through his hair, grimacing at the grime stuck to his skin.

"My gut tells me there's something in that room. I hope I'm right." His dogs panted up at him, and Will smiled when they followed him into the house. Dogs were loyal, and he was glad that even in Hell he had them by his side.

He commanded them to stay downstairs, and though one or two of them whined in protest, they stayed behind obediently. Whatever it was in that room, Will didn't want to subject his dogs to it, even if they weren't his real dogs. Will carefully went upstairs and stood in front of Walter's door, staring at the handle for a tense moment.

With one last deep breath, he pushed it open and stepped inside before closing the door behind him. For a long minute, he couldn't see anything but deep darkness. His hand tightened on the door handle, using the cold touch of brass to keep him grounded in this endless void.

Will…

It was a whisper, a familiar one.

"Hannibal?" Will's voice croaked out, tight with fear as he narrowed his eyes, trying to find the source. He hesitated before stepping forward, letting go of the door handle. Almost instantly he felt confined, as if he was surrounded on all sides. The air felt thick, and Will took in deep gasping breaths, choking.

Will, come to me.

Will stepped forward with closed eyes, following the voice blindly. He stopped when he ran into someone, and he flinched, almost falling back if it wasn't for the strong hands that held onto his biceps. He opened his eyes and let out a startled gasp, pulling away from the hands.

It was him, from when he'd killed the Dragon with Hannibal. There was still blood on those familiar clothes, his mouth wet and pressed into a grim line. His eyes held a bright glow, as if he was a live wire, full of energy and life.

"What the hell?" Will took another step back, staring as his mirror image took a step closer.

"You look like shit, Will."

Will bared his teeth, feeling more than a little unnerved when his doppelgänger spoke. "What are you? Why do you look like me?"

Other Will smiled, content and lazy, almost feline-like in his gracefulness. "I am you, and everything that became of you after the fall."

Will shook his head, running an unsteady hand through his curls as he peered up at other Will through his bangs. His brows furrowed in frustration, and he scowled. "I don't understand."

"This is who you truly are," The man stepped closer and Will resisted the urge to step back, curious as to what he wanted. "You are me, and I…"

He trailed off and Will watched with mild horror as his features shifted and melted off until Hannibal's face was staring back at him. Half of the man still looked like Will, but the other half was undeniably Hannibal. "I am you, just like you are his."

This time, Will didn't resist the urge to back away, his breath hitching in panic. He tensed when he found that he was frozen in place. "Wh- let me go!"

The hybrid stepped closer, caressing his face in a way that felt too much like Hannibal. He clenched his eyes, trying to think through the sensations, almost soft through its mocking tender touch. "What do you want from me?"

"It is not what I want from you," he murmured, tracing Will's stubble with a finger. "But rather, what I can offer you." The man leaned back, fingers trailing across Will's body and Will realized he was tracing where Will's scars should have been. "We are your darkness. You embraced it once, and consummated your relationship with Hannibal. This place has kept us at bay, but we both know it's not what you really want. You hunger, but you don't know what for. You ache for that feeling again. That feeling of belonging, of bruised fists and bloodied teeth. We can offer you that."

"I…" Will trailed off, realizing with a jolt that this creature felt warm. It felt like home. This wasn't a monster or a hallucination, this was him. This room was his darkness, hidden right under his nose. This near, he already felt complete, and it wasn't until he was shrouded in shadows that he realized this was what he had been missing all along. The parts of him that Hannibal had nurtured were screaming at him to accept.

He leaned forward, pleading with his body, straining against the hold on him as the creature met him halfway. It was a kiss, one full of teeth and aching pain, but it filled him with the bliss of finally being whole again. He groaned, his eyes opening halfway to watch as the creature blurred into a moving wave of darkness, as it flooded into him.

Suddenly, there was a piercing pain in his back.

Will screamed, back arching as the hold on him abruptly released. He gagged, choking as he threw up everything that had tried to make its way back into his body. He moaned, hands scrabbling at the floor as an unknown force tore him away from the part of himself he'd been so close to reuniting with.

"No, no please!" Will yelled out, trying to stay inside, to merge back with the one part of him that had tasted like Hannibal.

There was a sharp flash of light, the door opening behind him, before he was thrown back into the hallway. His body was twitching in shock as he laid on his side, mind trying to process what had just happened. He scrambled up, ignoring the throbbing pain and the heavy weight on his back as he tried to open the door again. This time it was locked, and though he tried again and again to open it, it didn't budge.

He snarled, both hands reaching up to fist in his hair as he turned-

Only to knock down two pictures on the wall.

Will paused, confused. He glanced behind his back, and almost had a heart attack at the large patterned wings that flared up behind him.

“What the fuck?!”

There was a rumble, the house falling apart around him as it slowly started fading away. The walls melted, the ceiling going with it, and Will was terrified. He kneeled down on the floor, panting as he tried to come to grips with his rapidly changing reality.

“Okay, okay something’s seriously wrong, fuck, fuck,” Will muttered as his mind scrambled for a way out of this. He had no idea what was going on but he knew it was nothing good.

He didn’t know what to do.

Will glanced at the wall, or what little of it was left. With one last desperate shove, he knocked his head hard against it. When that only served to make him slightly dazed, he tried again. He needed to reach Hannibal and the only way to do so was to be unconscious.

Desperate times called for desperate measures.

With one final hit, Will blacked out.

As predicted, their journey was cut short by an ambush. They had reached a section of Hell that had large rocks dotting the area, interspersed by the now familiar sight of doors. They had decided to take a break, and as they were cooking their food, a demon had tried to attack them.

It was a matter of seconds before Hannibal incapacitated him, purposefully keeping him alive for interrogation. Abigail, for her part, wisely stood out of the way, eyes wary as she watched Hannibal tie up the demon with the rope they’d brought with them for this purpose. They leaned him against one of the rocks, Abigail keeping an eye out for any potential ambushes.

Hannibal leaned over and tilted the demon’s head up, taking in the dazed eyes as he smiled. “So, tell me, are you a part of the royal guard?”

“Fuck off,” the demon muttered before spitting on Hannibal. Hannibal raised a brow, pulling out a handkerchief as he wiped his armor of the offending liquid.

“I see,” Hannibal said rather politely as he stood back up. “If you are not, then you are of no use to us.”

Hannibal nodded at Abigail, and the girl pressed her lips in a grim line before pulling out a hunting knife and advancing on the demon. The demon spluttered then, leaning away from her as he darted terrified eyes at Hannibal.

“Wait!”

Abigail paused, and when Hannibal tilted his head in consideration, she stepped away and let him handle the situation.

“Do you have an answer for us now? Please do speak while you still can, torturing you would be enjoyable for us but probably detrimental to your ability to form words.”

The demon took in a deep breath before muttering. “Yes, I’m part of the royal guard.”

“Excellent,” Hannibal smiled, clapping his hands together once before leaning over to rifle through his pack. “Now that wasn’t so hard was it?”

When Hannibal found what he was looking for, he held it up for the demon to see. It was one of the spear points, fashioned into a small blade of sorts that Hannibal had every intention of wielding like his trusty scalpels.

“What is that for?” The demon whispered, tongue licking over dry lips as he shifted in place nervously.

“This?” Hannibal asked, stepping over to the demon and crouching down. “This is none of your concern as long as you answer truthfully. Know that for every lie, a piece of you will have the honor of gracing our dinner table. And I *will* know if you lie.”

“Okay,” the demon answered, eyes wide as Hannibal grinned. It was terrifying, and much more bloodthirsty than anything in Hell.

“I’m glad we’ve reached an understanding,” Hannibal paused, looking contemplative as he slowly slid the tip of the blade over one of his fingers. A spot of blood welled up, and Hannibal licked it off almost absentmindedly. The demon swallowed hard, the sharpness of the blade more than apparent. “Now, my first question is simple. Are there more of you coming after us?”

“Yes, I was sent out to scout the area. We heard news of the massacre in a nearby town and came to investigate.”

Hannibal nodded, satisfied with that answer. He glanced at Abigail, and she looked back at him, her face scrunched in worry. They would have to make this quick, the other demons would not be far behind, especially if this one didn’t make it back.

“This next question is very important so listen carefully: where is Will Graham?”

The demon frowned, brows furrowing in confusion as his mouth opened then closed. There was one more long pause before he spoke up, words tripping over themselves when Hannibal raised the blade threateningly.

“I-I don’t know.”

“You don’t know?” Hannibal repeated, raising a brow. “We were told it was the duty of the royal guards to guide each soul to its designated place. Remember, if you lie, you will lose a limb.”

“I swear, I don’t know who you’re talking about,” The demon replied, tugging at the ropes in desperation. “We remember every soul that passes through here, and Will Graham is not one that has ever passed through our gates.”

Hannibal mulled over the words for a moment more before abruptly slitting the demon’s throat. He barely flinched as the black arterial spray hit his face, dripping down and staining his clothes.

He stood, and didn’t move for long enough that Abigail glanced at him nervously. He was eerily silent, a small frown on his face.

“Hannibal?”

He blinked, as if breaking out of a daze and turned to face Abigail. His expression was almost unreadable. He tipped his head back with a sigh, eyes closed.

“Oh, you clever, clever boy. You fled where I could not reach you.” Hannibal murmured, quiet enough that Abigail almost didn’t catch the words.

After a tense moment, he moved to his bag and picked it up. Abigail followed, her movements unsure as she packed up the food they’d been cooking, giving one last glance at the body they were leaving behind.

“Will isn’t in Hell.”

Abigail blinked up at him, taking in the tight edges of his eyes, the way his grip almost tore the bag he held. Hannibal smiled, but this time, it was one that was brittle and full of anger.

“And if Will isn’t in Hell…”

“He’s in Heaven,” Abigail finished faintly, closing her eyes as she imagined a world where Hannibal wouldn’t have Will by his side. She shuddered, and knew that there had to be another way, because if they didn’t reunite them, there was no telling what Hannibal would do. “We’ll find him.”

Hannibal nodded. “I suppose we will. But it is unlikely that we’ll be able to reach him from here. He will have to come to us,” Hannibal paused, glancing around before gesturing to a cropping of rocks further down the road. “We’ll stop there for the day, I will need to contact Will.”

Abigail nodded, eyes downcast as she thought about Will, and what it meant that his Heaven consisted of Molly and a normal life. She knew that Hannibal was thinking the same thing, and his stiff demeanor was a result of that conclusion.

She sighed. Hopefully they would be able to get some answers before Hannibal decided to destroy this whole place.

When Will opened his eyes, they were standing in a field. He blinked a few times, squinting at the bright sunlight as he glanced around. He barely registered the impaled body a few feet away from him, ravens and crows devouring her body.

“Rather nostalgic, don’t you think?”

Will couldn’t help the way his eyes trailed over the scene, the first present the Ripper had gifted him, before settling his eyes on Hannibal. Specks of black blood laid a frightful pattern on his face but his sad smile softened the unsettling sight.

“Take a seat, Will.”

Will stepped back, and his feet bumped into the sofa chair he hadn’t noticed before. He sat, feeling out of sorts as he tried to remember how he got here.

“I…”

Will trailed off, and Hannibal leaned back in his chair before folding his hands in his lap, pinning Will with a scrutinizing stare.

“You don’t look so well.”

Will let out a bitter laugh at that, running a hand through his hair and flinching when the touch hurt. He pulled his hand back and stared at the blood on his palm.

“Oh,” Will said faintly, slowly remembering the way the house had fallen apart around him. “Shit.” More alert now, he leaned forward, scowling at the fact that even in this dream everything felt a little fuzzy, probably a product of the injury he’d placed on himself. “Listen, Hannibal, something is wrong. I found this dark room, just like you told me to, and when I went in I saw myself.”

Will glanced off to the side, eyes distant as he pressed his bloodied fingers to his lips. Hannibal’s eyes sharpened at the red staining Will’s face, tilting his head as he wondered how it would taste if he licked it off of his skin.

“This room, was it a product of your imagination?”

“No,” Will shook his head, curls flying haphazardly as he ran a hand through it, wincing again at the bump on his head. “It felt too real for that.”

He paused, frowning. “But then again, all my hallucinations feel real in that place. I just…it just felt different.”

“Different in what way? Often times, we see ourselves only when we do not feel complete. We see this being as a separate entity, one that we can become, if we allowed ourselves to. It is an exercise in self-elevation, and an indication of inner turmoil.” Hannibal had spoken evenly thus far, but his next words had a trace of steel to it that had Will paying closer attention. “Is there something you are conflicted about? Perhaps some decisions you’d made?”

Will tilted his head and squinted at Hannibal, trying to decipher what game the man was trying to play now.

“My choices, as you’ve so kindly put it, have all been my own. Despite your many manipulations, towards the end, I went into it knowing full well the outcome of my actions,” Will paused, a slight smile on his face. “I can’t say that I wouldn’t change some things if I could, but…I don’t regret where it lead us.”

“Even if our path ended in our death and separation?” Hannibal’s eyes bore into Will’s with a fiery intensity, as if he could consume him through sight alone.

Will shrugged, glancing over to Cassie Boyle’s impaled body, admiring the precise placement of the antlers. “Death comes for all, it is only a matter of time. The path we chose was our way of defying death, of making Death heed our call and to take it into our own hands. Wouldn’t you say there is a sort of power in that?”

When Will looked back at Hannibal, the man was smiling, a fond look he only seemed to direct at Will, one that always stole his breath away.

“Perhaps, this is our way of playing God.”

“What better way than to take control of our own mortality?” Will murmured, eyes closing as he felt a sudden dizziness overtake him. He felt the dream closing in, collapsing as it wavered around the edges.

“Will.”

Hannibal’s voice was concerned, and Will opened his eyes to see the man leaning close, one hand raised as if he could place a comforting hand on his shoulder.

“Hannibal,” Will whispered, suddenly terrified of what was waiting for him outside of this dream. “I don’t know what’s happening. When I saw myself I think it was the darkness in me, not a hallucination but an actual physical manifestation of it. I tried to merge with it, and when I did, the whole world started collapsing around me…” Will stared down at his lap, hands clenched tightly into his pants as he tried to regulate his breathing. Hannibal was silent for long enough that he looked back up, trying to gauge the man’s reaction.

Hannibal didn’t look as worried as he’d expected, instead he looked almost smug. Will frowned, opening his mouth to snap at him when Hannibal spoke.

“When we fell, I fell willingly.”

Will closed his mouth, stunned at the open acknowledgement of the choice that had led them here, and the almost permission that Hannibal was admitting to. Hannibal smiled at him, something far off in his eyes as he confessed.

“I felt your arms holding me close, and when you tipped us over that cliff, I breathed in what I knew would be my last breath. There was a time once, long ago, when I would have done anything to survive.” Hannibal looked away then, his jaw clenched tight.

“Hannibal…” Will didn’t know what to say, he only knew that he wanted to comfort Hannibal.

“No, Will, I need to say this,” Hannibal took a deep breath before steadying himself, face blank yet again. “I had a sister, Mischa. It had been a cold winter, and we were snowed in. I was a mere child, and when the men came and murdered her after butchering my parents, I was powerless to stop them. They left me with her corpse and little else. There was no food.”

Will sucked in a breath, already knowing how this story would go. He could see it in his mind’s eye, a young Hannibal, barely old enough to take care of himself much less his little sister. He could see him screaming and screaming until eventually he went quiet. He could see him curled up in a tight ball in a corner, body shivering as his stomach growled in hunger. He could see him glancing at his little sister, first with tears, and later with hunger in his eyes.

He could see the first taste of warm meat, and the way it had filled him with life and vengeance. The way he had cherished every bite, unable to stop sobbing as he consumed and consumed.

When Will came back to himself, there were tears in his eyes, but Hannibal's were surprisingly dry. It was understandable, after all, the man had years to sit on this memory and mourn the little sister he'd lost. Hannibal flashed him a sad smile, and Will couldn't meet his eyes, staring at his sharp cheekbones instead.

"Her death gave me life, and in turn, I have taken many lives. But life wasn't what I expected. I think if I'd had the chance, I would have chosen to die with her in that cold winter cabin years ago." Hannibal lips tilted up into a more soft smile, eyes crinkled in the corners. "But then I wouldn't have met you, and no amount of torture can prevent me from staying by your side."

Will's breath caught in his throat, and he stood up, almost stumbling towards Hannibal, hands raised until they hit the barrier. Hannibal followed much more smoothly, standing in front of him, just a hair's breadth away from touching.

Will stared up into those dark eyes, swallowed by the depths of them and he finally breathed out the words choking his throat. "You are not the beginning I envisioned, but you are the ending I deserved."

Hannibal grinned, a truly happy look that made him seem years younger. They stared at each other for a long moment before Hannibal's expression grew serious. "I fell for you, in every way, but your journey is not over. This time, you must meet me in the middle, and fall for me just as far as I have for you."

Will scrunched his eyebrows, pondering the words. "You want me to come to you?"

Hannibal nodded. "Precisely, you must fall from grace, and meet me where sinners dwell and where our darkness will grow together."

"If you hadn't noticed, Hannibal, I'm already in Hell." Will rolled his eyes. "Not much further I can fall from here."

Hannibal stared at him for a long moment before speaking. "It seems you have fled where I can not follow. You are not in Hell."

"But if I'm not in-" Will cut himself off, eyes widening before shaking his head almost violently, a disbelieving scoff falling out of his mouth. "No way, I can't be in Heaven. First of all, I'm pretty sure I'm not angelic in any sense of the word. I've definitely killed people. And secondly, my Heaven is a normal life with Molly? I don't understand."

"Perhaps you should consider why exactly your Heaven consisted of a married life with Molly." Hannibal replied stiffly, and Will glared at him. There was definitely a hint of jealousy in his voice right now and Will was just about done with the man. They had literally died with each other, and even now Hannibal was unsure of Will's feelings for him.

Hannibal stepped away from the barrier, his hands falling to his sides as his face remained carefully blank. "Tell me, Will, do you relish our separation? Do you yearn for distance from the devil you called your own, and take joy from the fact that I cannot reach you?"

“No,” Will spit out, teeth bared and voice fierce in a paradox of conviction and resignation. “I am nothing without you, and you are nothing without me. We are intertwined and nothing in Heaven, Hell, or on Earth can change that.”

Will took a deep breath, his head hanging low as he rested his forehead on the hands he had pressed on the barrier. He felt tired suddenly, so tired of everything that had happened thus far. All he wanted was to be by Hannibal’s side again. His voice was a whisper, broken and soft. “After all, where else would I go?”

“Will-“ Will looked up and saw something flash across Hannibal’s face, a desperate longing that he quickly hid away. Before Hannibal could speak, the world started shaking around them. The sky started darkening and the field slowly started disappearing piece by piece. Will glanced around, panicked. This was the first time his dreams had tried to wake him up in such a terrifying way. When he was with Hannibal it was usually slow and steady.

They met each other’s eyes for one final time, and Will let the words fall out of his mouth, knowing with certainty that Hannibal would receive them.

“Wait for me. This time, I will be the one to come to you.”

Will flashed Hannibal a grim smile before the darkness pulled them apart.

Chapter End Notes

> Well, did anyone see that coming? I hinted at it quite a lot in terms of some clues here and there but it'll be more cleared up as we go :) Now it's no longer an issue of finding Will in Hell, but rather him getting to Hannibal by somehow breaking out of Heaven. Oof let's hope he gets to Hannibal before the emotional cannibal decides to kill everyone.
>
> If you guys liked the fic please do leave me a comment! I've really enjoyed the ones you guys have left me and I appreciate every single one <3 I am having Christmas plans this week (and the past week) so I haven't had the chance to answer comments but I will as soon as I can!!! I read them everyday so thank you for your lovely support ^-^
>
> ANNOUNCEMENT: Dragon and I are planning on cleaning up this fic and turning it into a PRINTED HANNIGRAM BOOK. This was originally just something we wanted to print for ourselves, but figured we would offer it to others if anyone wanted one. This will be a print of the original fic and we would be ordering it ourselves and sending it out to anyone who buys one. This is a NO-PROFIT project meaning we are literally just gonna be the go-between for anyone who wishes to buy one and you will only be paying the production price (it's super inexpensive like 5 dollars for a paperback version of this fic lol). In addition to that we will be printing postcard size/quality prints of the cover art piece as well as the final chapter art piece Dragon will be doing. Those can also be purchased if you'd like them.

Anyways, this will be way in the future (like next year once the fic finishes in February) so here is our FAQ which includes information about the project, prices, quality and shipping.

Again, a project like this takes a lot of time and effort, but we are offering this as a courtesy and gift to anyone interested and we do not profit from this.

We've really appreciated all the support so far and hope you guys are just as excited as we are!

If you wish to contact me regarding the printing of the fic or the fic itself, you can find my tumblr here. I'm also active on Twitter!

An Awareness

Chapter Notes

> Hey guys!! Hope you had an awesome holiday <3 I managed to get food poisoning during Christmas week so....I had planned to do the third installment of the Seasoned to Perfection series and also upload it but I believe I may have to delay it till the end of this week. For those reading that series, apologies and thank you for your patience!
>
> If you haven't seen the announcement on the last chapter, Dragon and I are printing this fic in its entirety as a book. For those interested we will be personally ordering the books and shipping them out at only the manufacture and shipping price. More information can be found at the end notes of this chapter <3
>
> Thanks as always to my friend Nicks for beta reading this chapter I'd be lost without them!
>
> The super cool owl graphic is done by jdragon122 who does amazing work despite her laptop fighting her every step of the way T_T Thank you my friend! <3

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Will woke up gradually, the pounding in his head loud and painful. His fingers twitched, and when he opened his eyes, he was met with the sight of a white floor.

Slowly, he sat up wincing at the heavy weight on his back and the way his entire body felt fatigued. Looking around, he noticed that he was in a square room. It was just large enough to not feel claustrophobic, but it was intimidating. The entire room was bare and all the walls were a plastic white.

He swallowed the lump of fear in his throat, unsure of how he was going to proceed. It seemed he'd broken out of whatever illusion they'd put him under, but it still didn't explain how he got out.

He narrowed his eyes, and noticed the doorknob that seemed to be placed into a section of the wall. He remembered Hannibal telling him that Hell was merely a series of rooms and doors that led to them. Maybe this was the same thing?

Will tried to stand up and let out a grunt of surprise when he toppled forward onto his hands and knees. The weight he'd felt, that he'd assumed was fatigue of his muscles, was much more tangible than he'd expected. Glancing over his shoulder, his mouth fell open at the gigantic wings neatly folded along his back.

Will panicked and lifted a hand up to touch them, and as if it was reacting to his emotions, they fluttered anxiously. They were a tawny brown that reminded him of hawk wings, the patterning distinct with bits of white and black feathers dispersed within the brown. The primary feathers were tipped black, giving his wings an elegant but dangerous look.

“What the fuck?” Will stared as his hands made contact with the fluffy down feathers at the base of the wings where they met his back. He could feel the tattered edges of his shirt there, and realized the wings had probably burst out without regard to his clothing. He shuddered, registering the fact that he could *feel* every caress on the wings.

“Jesus fucking christ.” Will muttered as he retracted his hand and ran it down his face wearily. He had no idea what the hell was happening, and he was more than a little annoyed at his extra appendages. He felt distinctly violated. He hadn’t asked for wings, but apparently he had them now.

Thinking back, he remembered the vague pangs of back pain that had led up to him breaking out of his Heaven, so it was possible that this was an eventuality. Perhaps all humans eventually grew wings if they stayed in Heaven long enough? He had no idea, and he wouldn’t be able to find any answers in this room.

Getting up carefully, he stood for a moment, rotating his shoulders and shaking his wings a little to try and get used to the weight. They remained immobile on his back, and he hoped they would stay that way, otherwise he was likely to topple over again. It was only by standing that he realized how large the wings truly were. The primary feathers reached past his knees, and he marveled at the fact that his back hadn’t broken from all the extra weight. Considering how large his wings looked, he would guess they had a wingspan of at least thirteen feet across, but they weren’t as heavy as he’d anticipated.

He sighed, mind flashing back to his encounter with Hannibal. He knew for a fact Hannibal would be fascinated by this new change in him. He’d probably analyze every aspect of his change and ache to touch Will’s new appendages, the one part of him the doctor hadn’t laid his hands on yet. Not that Hannibal and Will had ever had a sexual relationship, though he wasn’t adverse to the idea. It was just that the doctor had tended to his injuries throughout the years, and he’d seen every part of Will already. He knew Hannibal would be equal parts intrigued and clinical about his wings.

It sent a shudder of desire through him, imagining Hannibal’s hands on him. His wings caught him by surprise as they reacted to his desire, flaring out and presenting themselves with a flourish. Will stumbled, startled by the sudden unbalanced weight. They quickly settled down afterwards, and Will squinted at his wings, tense.

Once he was certain they wouldn’t surprise him again, he decided that he’d stalled long enough. It was time to face the outside world and hopefully figure out a way to leave. With a deep breath, he walked over to the door and turned the doorknob. It swung open easily, and Will strode out decisively, jaw clenched tight as he shielded his eyes against the sudden sunlight.

It was bright out, brighter than the white room had been, and he felt himself let out a small breath of awe as he turned in a slow circle. He was on a plain of sorts, the grass tickling his bare feet and the dirt cold against his toes. The plain seemed to stretch endlessly in all directions, only broken by treelines far in the distance. Across the plain stood doors of all shapes, colors, and sizes.

Will let his door swing shut behind him and turned around to study it. It was an exact replica of the door to the house he'd shared with Molly and Walter. It even had the small chuff marks that Will had accidentally left the time he'd dragged one of his motors inside. Feeling almost wistful, he dragged his hand over the wood, humming at the warm feeling it seemed to exude. His Heaven with Molly had been peaceful in a way. If he'd never met Hannibal, if he hadn't changed so much, perhaps this would be his idea of Heaven. But now, after Hannibal, he could no longer see a future more beautiful than coming home with Hannibal bloodied after a kill, their fingers searching for purchase on clothed skin, lips hungry for each other.

He closed his eyes, and imagined the way Hannibal would taste. He could see it in his mind's eye, his vivid imagination guiding him as he pressed fingers to his trembling lips.

What do you see?

It was a whisper from long ago, and Will couldn't help the way he sighed out the words. "I see you, Hannibal."

"Hello, Will."

Will jerked back, turning so quickly that his wings flared out in alarm. He leaned a hand against his door, grasping at the edges of it with a white-knuckled grip. Wild-eyed, he glanced around, his eyes focusing on the woman standing in front of him.

His mouth gaped open and he cleared his throat quickly. "Molly?"

She smiled at him, a familiar sight. She was dressed in a simple white dress, but what made her stand out were the pure white wings against her back. They were much more relaxed than Will's and he could tell she was comfortable with them in a way that screamed of experience, unlike Will's fumbling.

"Not Molly, but it doesn't surprise me your mind imagines me as her."

"Who-" Will bared his teeth, before forcing his expression into a more placid expression, his lips pressed together tightly. "What are you?"

"My name is not something conveyable in human tongue, and my visage impossible to comprehend, so you may call me Molly if you wish." Her smile gentled, almost placating as she held a hand up. "I am an angel, as are you now."

"What the hell do you mean?" Will demanded, his mind jumping over the fact that apparently angels were fucking real, and focusing on the way she'd implied he was one too.

She grinned at him, and swept a hand behind her, as if presenting him with the view. "You are one of few humans blessed with angelhood. With this, you now have opportunities far beyond your wildest imaginations."

Will shook his head, a hand coming up to swipe his bangs out of his eyes as he glared down at the floor. “Why? I don’t understand why I’m here or why I’m supposedly an angel now. I didn’t ask for this.”

Molly was silent for a long moment, and Will glanced up quickly, trying to gauge her reaction. From the short glance, he could tell she was unsettled, and pensive as she frowned.

“We wish for you to remain in Heaven.”

“But I don’t want to stay here,” Will retorted, mind racing. “Why are you trying so hard to keep me here?”

Molly sighed, weary in a way that spoke of years of struggling and pain. She gestured for him to follow her, and with one last tentative glance at the door to his Heaven, he fell into step beside her.

“There is more at stake here than your desires and wants.” Molly’s voice was firm, a certain steel to it that her coaxing persona didn’t have before. “Hannibal is…” She trailed off before sighing, her wings fluttering behind her.

“What does Hannibal have to do with anything?” Will asked, his voice barely a whisper as he felt a sinking feeling take hold of his heart.

Molly shot him a glance that told Will all he needed to know.

“It has *everything* to do with Hannibal. Every few millennia, we have a soul that is born pure, brighter than even the most gracious of souls. It is a rare occasion when such a pure soul becomes sullied, changed and twisted beyond recognition. Hannibal was one such soul, and his purity was taken from him forcefully. But every incident after that was his choosing, and in doing so, he was irrevocably changed.” She glanced up at him, taking in his reaction.

Will was silent, his fists clenched by his sides. His wings were practically stone with how tense they were. She continued, tone more gentle, as if she could see his inner turmoil. “Hannibal is a monster, and someone like that is destined to be the next ruler of Hell.”

“He’s…” Will trailed off, not even sure where to start. He knew that Hannibal had always been unique, but he didn’t know it was at such a spiritual level as well. “He’s not as bad as you think.” It was a soft protest, a weak whisper.

“Perhaps not,” Molly smiled, her eyes sad. “But that is in part because of you meeting Hannibal.”

Will’s head jerked up at that, eyes wide as he met Molly’s kind expression.

“You changed him, and the monster was tamed.”

Will scoffed, his hands shaking with the realization that he’d changed Hannibal so completely. “Hannibal can’t be tamed.”

“No,” Molly smiled, and this time it was genuine. “He can’t. But he can certainly be softened into something a little more forgiving.”

“His forgiveness usually lands me in the hospital,” Will snarked, his fingers traced the smile Hannibal had left on his stomach, the scar bumpy even through his shirt.

“Yet, you lived every time.” Molly corrected, soothingly. “There was a reason for that, just like there is a reason why you need to stay here with us.”

Will glanced at her out of the corner of his eye, his lips pulling down into a frown. “I don’t want to be here.”

A gentle hand on his arm stopped him, and he turned towards her. She bit at her bottom lip, a wholly human gesture that was almost laughable coming from something so otherworldly. “Hannibal wasn’t the only one who was changed.”

Will’s brows furrowed, his head tilting as he spoke. “What do you mean?”

Molly sighed, and pressed a hand to his chest. Will flinched back when a bright light enveloped him. When it settled, he could see it dancing over his skin, like veins of white gold. In between the brilliant strands were slower moving tendrils, murky black and heavy with sinister intent. Will stared at his arms, tracing the tendrils with awe, and watching as they danced out of his grasp before resettling.

“That is your soul,” Molly said, eyes reflecting the light dancing across Will’s skin. “And as you can see, Hannibal has sunk his claws into you at a soul-deep level. You are changed just as much as him.”

“What does that mean for me?” Will whispered as he stared down at the very visible evidence of just how much Hannibal has corrupted him. One of the dark tendrils seemed to react to his gaze and crawl higher up his arm, a caress underneath his skin. He shuddered and tried to ignore the warm sense of belonging he felt, knowing that it was a piece of Hannibal he wore.

“It means that as long as you stay away from Hannibal, you have a chance to recover. Eventually, his influence on you will fade, and you can reside here where you belong.” Molly pleaded softly, a hand resting against his arm, covering the tendrils. “This place is made for you, and you can be happy here if you let yourself. Didn’t you ever question why your home in Heaven was in Wolf Trap, Virginia when your house with Molly and Walter had always been in Maine?”

She pressed closer, her wings a whisper of sensation against him as they surrounded him in a drugging sort of warmth. “Wolf Trap was where you were most comfortable, and your family is who you need in order to feel some semblance of normality. Reality can be anything you want it to be and whatever you need. We’re just trying to help you be happy.”

Will pulled his arm away, skin crawling with disgust at seeing her cover his marks. He looked up and shook his head to rid himself of the way her words had burrowed themselves inside him, a snarl on his lips. “Don’t play dumb, there’s a reason you guys want me here in

Heaven, away from Hannibal, and it isn't out of the goodness of your hearts. You have a goal here, and I want to know what it is."

She froze, eyes wide and surprised. After a long moment, she relaxed, and this time, it was much more genuine, as if she was no longer pretending. Her smile was weary, but there was a certain fiery glint in her eyes that reminded him of the Molly he knew. "I see why Hannibal coveted you," She sighed, running a hand through her blond hair before answering him. "The truth is, your soul could have went to Heaven or Hell. It was destined for Heaven, but Hannibal's influence had tarnished you almost to the point of no return. We eventually decided to keep you in Heaven because we knew that if you two were together, you would consume everything."

Will opened his mouth to protest but with a stern look she held up a hand. "Don't try to deny it. Perhaps alone, you wouldn't have the same…proclivities as Hannibal, but with Hannibal as your partner and mirror, it was only a matter of time before you two caused an upheaval in Hell's hierarchy. It would have led to devastating loss on both sides. If Hell is unbalanced, Heaven starts to deteriorate. Hannibal's actions have already cost us."

Molly waved her hand, a motion that seemed to be pointed behind him, and Will turned. The air before him wavered before suddenly, the scenery before him was very different from the peaceful plains he'd seen. There were cracks in the ground, and patches of dry land. The doors that stood in that space were all in disrepair.

"What is this?" Will lifted a hand up, as if he could change it back to the nice and beautiful plain he'd seen. "Is this because of Hannibal?"

Molly nodded, face grim as she waved her hand and the illusion slid back into place. The dry land was replaced by nice green grass and cheerful doors. "Our priority is the balance of souls, and the structure of Heaven and Hell. Without this balance, our rooms suffer, and that impacts the souls here like a ripple effect. You already saw that with your Heaven."

"You mean, the dark room I was in." Will said, everything clicking together. "It wasn't supposed to be there. That's also why my Heaven is with Molly, because Heaven can not produce an illusion that isn't safe and nice. If my version of Heaven involved blood and murder, I wouldn't be here in the first place and thus it isn't a function of those rooms."

"Precisely," Molly sighed. "Already souls are finding the gaps in the spaces and reuniting with their small pieces of darkness. What had been pure before is now tainted, and we are unsure how much longer we can keep these souls happy and intact."

Will tilted his head, eyes scrutinizing as he scanned the doors standing cheerily in the open space. "If they managed to get into Heaven they shouldn't have any darkness."

Molly shook her head, her smile amused. "Humans are complex creatures. No one is purely good or evil. Everyone has darkness in them, Heaven is merely a place for those souls who had the fortitude to resist that darkness. It allows a reprieve from that eternal struggle, providing a barrier between each soul's darkness and allowing them to exist in peace."

Will pressed his lips together, looking away as he crossed his arms. “Then I should be in Hell. I wasn’t exactly the poster boy for restraint.”

“No,” Molly sighed before stepping closer and cupping his face. Her touch was startlingly warm, and Will felt suddenly nostalgic, a lump in his throat as he stared into familiar eyes. She smiled at him, pity in her gaze. “You are the most conflicted soul we’ve ever seen. You tried so hard to resist, but your meeting Hannibal and all the subsequent consequences were inevitable.” She looked down, closing her eyes tightly in a rare show of emotion, one she wasn’t replicating to make him comfortable but something that she seemed to feel deeply. “This was meant to be a second chance. But you didn’t want it, did you?”

Will shuddered, and he gently tugged her hand away from his face, fingers sliding across a soft palm before letting go. Her eyes, a cool grey, pinned him in place as he swallowed and took a step back. “Even if I wanted it, it’s not my place to decide.”

“Hannibal isn’t your keeper, Will.”

“Isn’t he?” Will let out a harsh bark of laughter, a shaking hand running through his hair. He felt unmoored by this new perspective and he felt himself wavering when he knew he couldn’t afford to. He could not allow himself to betray Hannibal a second time. Not when they were so close to a peaceful ending to their story. Maybe not for the unfortunate souls that crossed their path, but a finale that would satisfy both of them and leave them both intact. A part of him would always yearn for some peace and normality, but mostly, he just wanted Hannibal. “We may be in separate realms but my leash is pulled taut. My very soul calls to him, and it’s an ache that I will never escape, not as long as I exist.”

“You embraced your darkness long ago,” Molly eyes were filled with grief, mourning the loss of Will’s innocence. His humanity. “There is nowhere left for you to go. Every shadow is a whisper of him, and every piece of light only lengthens those shadows.”

Will clenched his jaw, standing straighter as his wings fluttered, the only indication of his anxiety over his next words. “Then you know why I can’t stay. I want- No, I *need* to be with Hannibal. And your Heaven can not give me what I need.”

She studied him, lips pursed. “He’s the only thing that still feels real to you.”

Will softened, stifling a longing sigh from breaking past his lips. “I don’t know who I am, if I’m not with him.”

“I don’t know if I’ll ever understand,” Molly responded, brows furrowed as she walked away from him. Will hesitated before following. “Angels are born knowing our purpose and ourselves as surely as we know everything that happens in the human world. Humans…your existence is one borne screaming and crying into the world and you continue screaming into the void until someone echoes back. Then, and only then do you know who you are, and who you are meant to be.”

She glanced back at him, that same sad look in her eyes. “Hannibal was the only one brave enough to hear your pain and reply with his own. And in doing so, you are his just as much as he is yours. Would it be cruel to say that I pity you?”

“No,” Will whispered, chest tight with an unnamed emotion. Something close to despair, a choking stillness akin to a long accepted understanding that this was his fate. But maybe, there was pride too, that this was the path he’d taken, walking assymetrical to the world’s expectations and rigid morals. “I pity myself too.”

They were silent for a long time, both lost in thought as Molly led them through the field and onto a path Will hadn’t noticed before.

“Where are you taking me?” Will murmured, tilting his head back and enjoying the breeze as it ruffles his feathers. They’re very sensitive, and every caress of the wind feels like a lover’s touch. He shivers, idly hoping that his sensitivity will eventually lessen. It wouldn’t do to get distracted by every errant wisp of wind.

“You said you wanted to leave,” Molly shrugged, walking and occasionally stopping to press a hand against a door and close her eyes. After each press of her hand to a door, she’d smile and continue on. “We’re not wardens here, Will. Unlike Hell, if you wish to leave you can do so.”

“And what, you’ll just lead me out the pearly gates?” Will asked, skeptical as he trailed after her, eyes darting around.

She gave him a strange look before responding. “I’ll lead you to the door. What happens then, will be your choice to make,” She smiled at him, and Will caught a flash of apprehension in her eyes before she looked forward again. “I have faith that you will make the right one this time.”

Will didn’t reassure her, nor did he deny her words. Instead, he could only clench his jaw and stare at her white wings and the fragile shape of her back as a feeling of dread grew within him.

“You’ve been quiet for a while.”

Hannibal glanced at Abigail out of the corner of his eye, taking in the genuine worry that she seemed to feel for him. Her teeth biting at her bottom lip. He reached out and tugged the abused flesh free, silently admonishing her for the bad habit.

“What is there to say?”

“Well,” Abigail started hesitantly before continuing on. “I thought you would be happier after talking to Will.”

“I am,” Hannibal allowed a small smile to cross his face, a small one as he remembered Will’s parting words to him. It had made him feel flustered for the first time in years. He had felt claimed, just as much as he had wanted to sink his teeth into Will and never let go. Still, his expression grew solemn as he contemplated their respective journeys. “I am just concerned as to how Will fares as he paves a path to us.”

“You don’t think he can do it?” Abigail questioned, her voice disbelieving as she frowned at Hannibal. “It’s not like you to doubt him.”

Hannibal pursed his lips, not meeting her eyes as he stared ahead at the red, dusty land that stretched before them. The path was cobbled stone now, and noticeably higher quality than the dirt roads before. Soon they would reach the castle, they’d already dispatched three separate groups of demons that had been sent to apprehend them. “I do not doubt Will’s capabilities, but rather the uncertainty of this new reality we find ourselves in. We are working with forces beyond our comprehension.”

Abigail scoffed, a rude sound that had him giving her a stern stare. “And yet your plan is to kill the Devil himself.”

Hannibal grinned at her, sharp teeth showing as he felt a spark of joy at the reminder. It would be his greatest achievement and likely a worthy opponent. “Killing is natural. It is something any one of us can do, and with enough time cultivate the skills necessary to make it an art form.”

“And you want to turn the Devil into art.”

It wasn’t a question because she knew exactly what Hannibal wanted. It was in the glint in his red eyes, the beast lurking behind them almost palpable in the air.

“He will be a worthy canvas.” Hannibal murmured, mind already conjuring images and displays he wanted to create with the Devil’s flesh. It would be intoxicating, after years of arranging human forms into figures resembling divinity and art of the highest degree, he would now paint broad strokes with the blood of Lucifer. Hannibal wondered how he would taste like.

He shuddered, almost salivating at the thought. To consume was to become, and to eat the Devil was nothing short of a religious experience.

Hannibal tilted his head, a subtle movement that Abigail picked up on instantly. Days of traveling together had led to them sharing an ease of communication that didn’t always include words. Abigail sucked in a deep breath, relaxing as her hand rested casually on her belt, fingers brushing her dagger.

It seems, the next group of demons was upon them.

Hannibal smiled at her, and when she smiled back, there was a flash of movement. Soon after, the ground was painted a deep black, the viscous liquid soaking the land of Hell.

And standing victorious was a soul darker than the Devil, and a monster growing into her own skin.

They grinned, and their white teeth were tainted black with blood.

Chapter End Notes

Hopefully this has cleared some stuff up, also can we get a wahoo for WING!WILL???? Wing fics are my guilty pleasure so had to add it ;) My main motivation for this fic is that Hannibal fell for Will in every way, and I wanted Will to make that choice as well. So they can meet in the middle and be true equals. This time, it's Will who has to make the choice and meet Hannibal in the middle. We only have a few chapters left my friends, thank you to all those who have been with us on this journey, and if you enjoyed this chapter please do leave a comment! I appreciate every one <3

Also haha I realized I can finally talk about this but the page breaks were also hints, basically the one with the red rock and skull was always a transition page break into Hell AKA Hannibal's realm and the one with the feathers and flowers was Heaven AKA Will's realm. The feathers were Will's feathers ;)

You can find this pretty wing graphic by Dragon here on tumblr or retweet it here on Twitter.

If you're interested in getting this fic as a printed Hannigram book, please check out this FAQ which has all the necessary information.

Reminder that this is a NO-PROFIT project and we're just offering the option for those interested ^-^

If you wish to contact me regarding the printing of the fic or the fic itself, you can find my tumblr here. I'm also active on Twitter!

An Offering

Chapter Notes

You guys!! Two big things in this chapter so let's see how it goes and what ya'll think <3

A million thanks to my lovely beta Nicks who edited this chapter!

As always, the amazing graphic is by jdragon122!! Don't we just love a bloody Will <3 Ah and in exciting news Dragon has been working on the final art piece (which shall be posted with the epilogue/chapter 13)!! It's been a real treat watching her work on it and it's fucking stunning I'm so excited for you all to see it!

A quick note for those who were following my Seasoned to Perfection series: The Fall piece will be posted in about 2 hours or so. (double update today for my Hannigram fics wooo) Thank you for your patience!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Trailing wisps of light flew past him at the corners of his eyes. It was almost unsettling, the way the field lit up with streams of warmth even though there wasn't a sun in the sky. When he tried to focus his gaze on the empty air around him, there was nothing but stillness and the imagined echoes of happy laughter.

It sounded like Molly.

It sounded like Alana.

It sounded like all the people in his life who had tried to help him. It sounded *pure*.

In his head, overwhelming the light and laughter, was the whisper of a voice he knew too well.

Dear Will, how magnificent you've become…

"Do you like your wings?"

Will blinked out of the daze he'd fallen into, his breathing steady despite what felt like an eternity of walking. He'd been following behind Molly for a while now and the road still stretched far beyond where his eyes could see. They had not encountered another soul or angel, the field around them filled with nothing but scattered, upright doors.

Will felt his lips quirk into a sardonic smile, shrugging his shoulders a little uncomfortably as his wings stretched out wide, blocking out the light for a moment before settling down. “They’re a part of me now. No choice but to get used to it.”

Molly slowed down until she was walking next to him, her hands clasped behind her back, brushing against her white wings. She glanced at Will out of the corner of her eye, a shrewd gaze with pursed lips. “You have a predator’s wings. Owl, to be precise. I wonder if that’s a product of your own design or one of Hannibal’s influence.”

Will stared straight ahead, lips pressed into a thin line as he saw the distinct patterning on his wings in his mind’s eye. “Owls are said to be seers. They thrive and hunt in the dark, and they have consistently symbolized wisdom.”

“Do you believe you are wise?”

It was a purely curious question, and her innocence reminded him of both Molly and Abigail in some ways. He felt more peaceful with her, her mind was unclouded by heavy complex human emotions. Maybe it was because she was a whole other species and his empathy didn’t function the same with her, but he liked to believe that it was because she was untouched by humanity’s evils.

Everyone he had ever known or come in contact with had undergone a drastic change. An evolution. Adapt and survive, or die trying. He didn’t know if it was because of Hannibal. Or maybe he had a hand in it too. Now more than ever, the lines between him and Hannibal felt blurred. Hannibal’s sins were his own, and that’s why Will knew he would never be able to fit into this facsimile of peace. Heaven wasn’t meant for souls like his.

Will’s smile was bitter, a huff of laughter breaking out of him. “Wise? Someone wise would have taken one look at Hannibal and ran as far away from him as they could. Someone *wise*,” Will gritted his teeth, practically spitting out his words. “Wouldn’t be aching for a man like Hannibal.”

Will shook his head, his eyes focused on the ground, gaze blurred as he remembered hands cupping his cheeks and the jarring sensation of tubing shoved down his throat. He remembered the feeling of Abigail’s blood between his fingers. “I am far from wise. I saw too much, felt too much, and the devil decided he would have me. I put up a token resistance, but the truth was I’d signed a deal with the devil the moment I laid eyes on Hannibal and saw someone worth knowing.”

Molly didn’t respond for a long time, and Will let himself relax, still slightly agitated from the questions. When she eventually spoke, her words were slow and measured.

“You refer to Hannibal as the devil quite often. Do you believe him to be something greater than human?”

Will sighed, a hand coming up to run through his hair, fingers tracing down his cheeks to rub at his stubble. “Hannibal has always been something *more* to me. He has a way of getting into your head that always seemed like he was dragging out the deepest, darkest parts of your soul. Devil is the closest descriptor I’d attribute to a man like Hannibal.”

“Your Hannibal sounds like the Devil.” Molly mused, a wary tilt to her lips. “You know Lucifer is a real entity, yet you still feel more for Hannibal than you do for the Devil himself.”

“If I was the Devil, I’d fear Hannibal.” Will bared his teeth, a pleased grin. He could feel his roiling darkness, the way it pressed on his chest and made him feel pride at how strong Hannibal was.

Molly shook her head, a frown on her face as she stared out over the fields, the slight breeze caressing the small flowers dotting the green grass with bright colors. “You have lived so long under the hands of your personal devil that you no longer fear the very real threat of Lucifer.”

Will shrugged, unsettled but admitting to the truth of her words. “Maybe so, but it’s not me who’ll be facing off with Lucifer.”

“No,” Molly agreed before looking at him, her grey eyes stormy with knowledge beyond the scope of humanity’s limits. “What exactly do you think Lucifer is like?”

“I imagine he’s not a great person.” Will smiled at her but his attempt at humor fell away when he saw her serious expression.

“They’re not,” Molly replied slowly, eyes distant as she seemed to remember something and shudder. “The Devil isn’t powerful because of some cosmic powers. Lucifer has ruled unattested because of their charisma.”

Will raised a brow, fighting back a smirk. “You’re telling me the Devil is powerful because he’s charismatic?”

Molly’s gaze sharpened then, and Will fought back the short inhale at the steel in her eyes. “Lucifer isn’t a bedtime story, Will. Lucifer was an angel that knew the ins and outs of humanity and saw that the darkness was worth more to them than the light. Lucifer was someone who managed to convince entire armies of angels, loyal to Heaven for eternities, to turn their back on the rest of us. The Devil isn’t someone to take lightly. They know your deepest desires, and they keep you loyal through the power of their knowledge.”

Molly stepped closer to him, and Will suppressed the urge to step back, her urgency jarring. Her voice was a low whisper when she finally continued, as if afraid the Devil may hear them. “Lucifer is someone that can know you, and we both understand how powerful the sensation of being *known* is. Especially when it’s used against you,” She tilted her head, pinning him with her gaze. “That’s how you controlled Hannibal after all. Those little games you two played? Those are exactly the kind of games the Devil excels at. They will take what Hannibal values the most, and use it against him.”

Will scoffed, shaking his head to try and settle his nerves. “If the Devil wears my face to greet Hannibal, I can assure you that Hannibal would kill them with a smile. Hell, he’d probably enjoy it too.”

"You are mistaken if you believe it will be that simple. Do you know what twisted Hannibal into the monster he is today? It was loneliness. He longs for a family, and that is exactly what Lucifer will give him. When Hannibal meets the Devil, he will change, just as you have. And this time, you may not get him back."

Those words snapped something in Will and his hand shot out without his control, his nails digging into her wrist as he snarled in her face. His wings flared out and above, blocking out the light as he loomed over her. "Hannibal is *mine* and nothing on Heaven, Hell, or Earth will get in the way of that."

Molly's eyes were unreadable, though her face softened with pity. "In time, you will see that I am right. It is better for you if you stay here with us, and leave Hannibal to his fate."

Will stepped back, roughly pushing her arm away as he marched on ahead, his ruffled feathers settling down. "When Hannibal and I reach our ending, it will be bloody and final, but it will be our decision to do so."

"You meant for your story to end on that cliff."

Their fight with the Dragon and the subsequent sequence of events had all seemed like a beautiful dream to Will. In Heaven, it had seemed even more unlikely, but it was a memory he remembered with a clarity he felt more than saw. He could feel the elation, the quiet sense of power as he'd killed with Hannibal, and the fierce jolt of want tempered only by Hannibal's steady heartbeat under his bloodied cheek. It was intoxicating, and it was the ending he would have accepted for both of them.

"I wanted to give both of us an ending," Will whispered, shoulders slumping as he felt the anger drain out of him, a desolate yearning growing in its place. "And I guess in a way I succeeded."

"I hope, for your sake, that your end isn't one you'll regret."

Will glanced at her, knowing that her words were sincere despite the way he'd lashed out at her.

"As long as it's with him," Will tilted his head back, the warm light softening the harsh lines of his face. He wondered, if he shrouded himself in shadows, if it would feel like Hannibal's fingers caressing his cheeks. "Any ending is one of our design."

Within one blink of an eye and the next, they were in front of a door. Will stared at it, squinting incredulously at how it had seemed to appear out of nowhere in the middle of the path.

"Is that…?"

"Yes," Molly's voice was heavy as she stepped up to the plain looking white door, her fingers gently tracing the frame, delicate against the sturdy wood. "This is where you can leave. All you have to do is imagine the person you wish to be with, and it'll deliver you to where you need to go."

“Just like that?” Will asked skeptically, taking a step closer and placing a hand on the door. It was warm and hummed with energy.

“Just like that,” Molly nodded before stepping to the side, eyes sad as she looked at Will. “But every door needs a key.”

“And I’m guessing you have the key?” Will eyed the door, a small smile on his face as he imagined his reunion with Hannibal. He turned to Molly, his smile falling when he noticed the way she held herself, calm but with an undercurrent of tension. Will’s words were slow, a dawning wariness as he watched her. “So what do I do now?”

“Now,” Molly stepped forward, arms spread out as she gave him a steady look, white wings spread behind her. “You kill me.”

Hannibal opened his eyes to Will’s home in Wolf Trap. It was a comforting place, and that was likely why Will had dreamed of it this time. Will was already pacing in front of him, and Hannibal leaned back in the armchair, something settling inside him as he assumed the familiar role of therapist to one Will Graham.

“What seems to be the problem, Will?”

Will gave him an incredulous glare, a huff of frustration leaving his lips as he ran a hand down his face. “Are you seriously asking me that? A lot of things are the problem! Everything and everyone is a problem! I have fucking wings for fuck’s sake.”

Hannibal frowned, an admonishing click of his tongue at Will’s frantic cursing. He had noticed that Will had new appendages, but was content to let Will explain them to him. He tracked the agitated flutter of Will’s tawny wings with great interest, his tongue flicking out onto his lips to wet them.

“And how did you go about gaining your wings?”

Will blinked at Hannibal, seeming genuinely surprised by the question before his expression cleared up. He sat down gingerly on the chair across from Hannibal, rubbing a hand at the back of his neck as he flushed a little, his wings pulled tight against his back in a futile effort to hide. “I uh, the angels gave them to me I guess. Said that I’d been ‘blessed’ for whatever reason. It wasn’t sincere anyways. They thought that it would be an incentive for me to stay in Heaven. To keep me away from you.”

“And was it?” Hannibal raised a brow.

“Was it what?” Will parroted back, confused for a moment before letting out a scoff. “No, no of course not. I don’t want to be an angel or whatever the hell they’re trying to make me. I’m not cut out for it.”

“I often saw you in an angelic light, even when you were draped in shadows. If you’d lived during the Grecian times, I’m certain you would have been the inspiration of every artist, a living Botticelli. I must admit, with those wings you certainly look the part.” Hannibal’s gaze was heated, and Will could almost feel it like a physical caress down his sensitive wings.

Will frowned at Hannibal, even as his gaze focused on Hannibal’s robes, a faint blush on his cheeks. “That-“ He cleared his throat, meeting Hannibal’s eyes. “I don’t need it. I just need you.”

Hannibal smiled, almost smug at the way Will had given in so wholly to Hannibal. They’d struggled against each other for so long that it was still a novelty seeing Will ache for him. “And you shall have me,” Hannibal purred, crossing his legs and tilting his head. “Tell me, how soon will it be until you’re in my grasp once again?”

At the reminder Will’s mood darkened, and he looked away, staring down at his hands clasped tightly together, lips pressed into a thin line. “I’m figuring it out,” Will paused for a moment, almost hesitant before continuing. “I’ve been traveling with someone.”

“Oh?” Hannibal leaned forward before he could stop himself, a hungry possessiveness growing in his chest. “Pray tell, who your mysterious companion is.”

“It’s Molly,” Will trailed off when he felt Hannibal stiffen. A glance at the man’s face showed him frozen, a myriad of emotions flashing through his eyes before Hannibal settled on a thin veneer of calm.

“I wasn’t aware she had passed away.”

Will startled, blinking at Hannibal before letting out a huff of laughter, realizing he hadn’t explained properly. “No Hannibal, not the Molly we know. She’s an angel and she looks like Molly so that’s why I’ve been calling her that. They usually assume the face of someone familiar to us, and I guess you were too *evil* to emulate,” Will gave a tight lipped smile to Hannibal, rolling his eyes at the smug look Hannibal shot back. “When I stepped out of my Heaven, she was there to greet me. She’s been guiding me ever since then.”

“Hm,” Hannibal hummed, relaxing into his chair with a measure of relief. “Then what seems to be the problem?” Hannibal knew Will wasn’t telling him the whole story, he was too agitated.

Will sighed, pressing his fingers to his eyes until it burned. “We’ve reached the gate but in order to open it and leave I have to kill her first.”

Hannibal stayed quiet, letting Will struggle through his thoughts.

“I don’t want to kill her.”

“That is quite the dilemma,” Hannibal stood, smiling when Will shot him an irritated look before standing as well and following him to the barrier. “Your kills thus far have been largely out of self defense. To murder someone like Molly, someone good and arguably one of the purest creatures in the world, would be a burden to bear.”

Will shook his head, stepping closer until he was leaning his forehead against the invisible barrier with a heavy sigh. “It wouldn’t be a burden. Not to me.”

Hannibal raised an eyebrow even as he used a hand to gently trace where Will’s head met the air, as if he could stroke his hair through the wall between them. “That’s a definitive remark to make. Why do you say that?”

“I-“ Will ran a shaking hand over his mouth, stepping back as he tried to gather his thoughts. “I don’t think that anything that can get me closer to you would ever be considered a burden. I’d burn a hundred cities and kill a thousand more to reach you.”

“And that scares you. You would sacrifice everything at the feet of your god, and you would beg for more.” Hannibal observed, a flare of dark want in his stomach at the way Will struggled so beautifully before his eyes. He felt powerful in that moment, and knowingly referred to himself as Will’s god. In a way he was, he had shaped Will into what he was, and had helped guide him in their shared darkness. “Your fear is what has chained you thus far, perhaps this is a way to release yourself from your bonds.”

Will let out a shaky laugh, eyes wet as he met Hannibal’s hungry gaze. “Did I really ever have a choice? I’m slowly realizing that when it comes to you, I have no limits.”

“Would you regret your actions?” Hannibal asked, curious and proud of his dear boy. Will had come so far, grown beyond Hannibal’s wildest expectations.

“Regret? No,” Will whispered, his gaze steady as he let Hannibal see him. “It would hurt, but I would do it anyways.”

“Because you believe you don’t have a choice?” Hannibal cocked his head to the side, fascinated.

“Because my choice will always be you, and only you, Hannibal.”

“Beautiful,” Hannibal murmured, a longing sigh falling from his lips as he licked them. “Your suffering makes you radiant, and your pain gives you strength. I don’t think I shall ever tire of seeing you stretch your limits. Have you killed her yet, dear Will?” Hannibal wished he could see Will at his most savage, covered in angel’s blood and towering over a creature with his wife's face. He almost couldn't hold back the shiver of pleasure that induced in him.

“No,” Will replied with a heavy breath through his nose, closing his eyes. “She told me I would have to kill her to open the gate and I panicked.”

“So you came to see me, to strengthen your resolve.”

“You keep me balanced,” Will gave a humorless chuckle at his words, realizing the irony in them. “Even when you drive me insane, I still feel safest in the eye of your storm.”

“Then I hope you will take this feeling with you into the land of the waking, and use it to guide your hand.” Hannibal whispered reverently, enamored by the confessions Will had graced him with so far. The world wavered around them, and Will looked up quickly. There was a deep longing in Will's face, and Hannibal could drown in the depths of those eyes.

“Wait, Hannibal.”

Hannibal waited patiently as Will struggled with his words, eyebrows furrowed. “Molly warned me that the Devil may disguise itself in a manner meant to appeal to you.”

Hannibal smirked. “You have nothing to fear, dear boy. Pale imitations of you bear no appeal to me. I will kill the Devil swiftly and without mercy.”

Instead of being offended, Will's lips quirked to one side, a scoff falling out of his lips as he shook his head. “Of course, I didn't doubt for a moment that you'd relish in killing me, even if it was a fake.”

Hannibal nodded, eyes twinkling with amusement. “I'm almost at the castle, Will. Come find me when you are ready.” Hannibal could see the walls melting away, and hoped that Will had heard him.

“I look forward to it.”

The words were quiet, whispered with an intensity that took Hannibal's breath away, and in between one wavering moment and the next, Hannibal hoped Will would come to him bloody and triumphant.

“Did you have a nice chat with Will?”

Hannibal smirked before slowly opening his eyes. He was leaning against a rock, a familiar position he found himself in when he visited Will in his dreams.

“It was enlightening.”

Abigail raised an eyebrow as she sat beside Hannibal, cleaning her dagger with a piece of cloth she’d taken off of one of the many demons they’d disposed of. “Aren’t all your conversations enlightening? You two like talking in riddles.”

Hannibal smiled, eyes crinkling at the corners before his expression smoothed out into something more contemplative. “Will has a choice to make, in order to leave Heaven.”

“And you’re worried his choice will be one that leads him away from you.” It wasn’t a question but rather a knowing statement, and Hannibal felt a flash of surprised pride at how perceptive Abigail had grown.

“I admit, Will hasn’t been the most consistent when it comes to choices that benefit the both of us.”

Abigail nodded. Though she didn’t know much about their history after she’d died, the fact that one of Will’s choices had lead to her death was something she was very aware of. Often times, Will made decisions in an effort to struggle away from Hannibal, but from what Hannibal had relayed to her on their journey, he’d changed since then. “I get why you’re worried, but I think that it’ll be different this time.”

Hannibal stayed quiet for a long moment before standing up gracefully and grabbing his pack. “For his sake, I hope it will be.”

Abigail flashed a knowing look at Hannibal, a frown on her lips. “If he doesn’t come to you, you’ll hunt him down.”

“It would be remiss not to use Hell’s many resources, once we become their new rulers.” Hannibal shot Abigail an almost mischievous smile, a dark look in his eyes. “Will could sequester himself in the most obscure corners in all the realms, and I would still find him.”

“Because he is yours?” Abigail sighed, more exasperated than worried.

“Precisely,” Hannibal grinned before stepping back onto the road, shouldering his pack a bit higher as Abigail followed after, tucking her dagger back in its sheath. Without another word, they continued walking, the palace now within their sights, though to call it that was inaccurate at best. Where they had anticipated obvious overtures of wealth and architecture, the building ahead of them was closer to a fortified castle than a palace.

In a matter of hours, they reached the castle after a rather uneventful walk. They both stared up at the castle, the towering spires seemed to pierce the perpetually dark skies, and the place was eerily silent.

“You would think they’d have a welcoming party for us,” Abigail mused, arms hugging herself as she bit at her bottom lip. Their hands were caked with blood, and she could feel the violence seep into her pores. Maybe it was this place, or maybe it was just her shedding her person suit.

“Perhaps we exhausted all their troops,” Hannibal glanced at her with a satisfied quirk to his lips. He gestured towards the castle doors, ornate dark wood that stretched up above them and seemed large enough for a giant to step through. “Come now, our journey is almost over.”

“Wait,” Abigail’s hand shot out, and she held onto Hannibal’s sleeve, staring down at the place where her fingers pressed against the fabric stiff with blood. “Do you think we’re ready?”

“To face the Devil?” Hannibal asked, one calloused hand coming up to gently tug her out of the light hold she had on him. He held her hand, thumb brushing over her knuckles in a small semblance of comfort. “We’ve fought our fair share of demons, both living and dead. To fight the Devil himself might be a fool’s errand, and I wouldn’t hold it against you if you wished to leave.”

Abigail was shaking her head before Hannibal had finished his words, her eyes looking up at him with a fire that reminded him so much of Will. Like father like daughter, Hannibal couldn’t help the fond smile that spread over his lips. “No, I-“ She shook her head again, hair falling out of the braid she’d put it into, in a futile attempt to save it from being dirtied with black blood. Her lips pressed into a thin line, and she turned to face the castle doors, her shoulders pulled back. “We do this together.”

She glanced at him out of the corner of her eye, a tired smile gracing her lips. It made her look younger, and it dawned on Hannibal that Hell had kept an almost constant tension on her face. Here, in front of the Devil’s lair, she inexplicably seemed more relaxed, as if resigned to their fate no matter what it would bring. “For Will.”

Hannibal nodded, eyes flinty and his teeth bared in a savage grin. “For Will.”

Hannibal moved towards the doors, and Abigail trailed after him, her hands on her dagger. “When we open these doors, make sure to stay close. Leave Lucifer to me.”

“Be careful.”

“I always am.” Hannibal flashed her one last smile before pushing the doors open.

For all his planning, for all his foresight, nothing prepared Hannibal for the sight that greeted him. He felt his hands fall down to his sides, he could see Abigail tense up next to him, glancing at Hannibal with confusion in her eyes.

“Hello, Hannibal.”

And when Hannibal breathed out, it was with a hoarse whisper, too soft in the roaring madness of Hell.

“*Mischa.*”

Chapter End Notes

Lmao surprise, that's why Molly largely used gender-neutral terms for the Devil xD It takes the form of whatever you yearn for, what you need the most. Will, on the other hand, is human so his assumptions would've been based on human understanding of who the Devil is. What do you guys think? Hope this chapter was interesting as well! And ahhh you guys we only have one final chapter left and then the epilogue and it's over T_T Thank you all for coming on this journey with me, please leave a comment in our final moments together, I'm going to miss you all.

You can find this bloody graphic by Dragon here on tumblr or retweet it here on Twitter.

For those who missed it WE ARE PRINTING THIS AS A HANNIGRAM BOOK. This is NOT for profit and is just something we're offering for those interested.

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A Sacrifice

Chapter Notes

> I'm screaming this is the second to last chapter my dudes!! So close to the end ahhhhh T_T
>
> This chapter was beta-ed by the ever lovely Nicks. Thank you for your wonderful help my friend.
>
> The graphic is created by the awesome jdragon122! Hilariously enough Dragon thought today was the last chapter and had been scrambling to finish the final art piece haha. But the final art piece is coming together and will be posted with the last chapter!! So excited for you guys to see it, it's so freaking pretty.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Will woke up gradually, every muscle bunching up with discomfort before he was even fully conscious. He sat up from where he'd lain on the grass, and he absentmindedly rubbed at his clothes as he avoided Molly's eyes. She was watching him, and though Will wondered how long she'd been doing that, it was still nothing compared to his apprehension for their current situation.

"Did you talk with Hannibal?"

Will looked up at her in surprise, noting the way her wings stretched out, strong and wide behind her. Her white dress fluttered in the wind, and Will stood up before facing her.

"I guess I shouldn't be surprised you know about that."

Molly flashed him a wry smile, eyes crinkling in the corners in a way that looked so similar to the Molly from his life that his breath hitched. "Your connection runs deep. Deeper than we can suppress. Even separated in different realms, it was futile to try and keep you two apart."

Will watched her warily, hands hanging loosely. "You always speak as if you've seen our lives."

"I did," Molly replied, before letting out a small chuckle. "You and Hannibal were a matter of great interest for the higher ups, and I was assigned to watch over you."

A flash of understanding passed through Will's face before he smoothed out his expression into one of careful neutrality. "Like a guardian angel."

“Something like that,” Molly’s smile was bitter, tinged with regret. “Despite my position, angels were not allowed to interfere with humans, to do so would be to take away your free will. Many times, I thought you would join us here, that Hannibal had finally pushed you into death’s arms. Yet time and time again, you survived him and willingly went back to his embrace.”

“Reba saw Francis for who he really was, and she had the good sense to run,” Will looked away from her eyes, fists clenched as he saw both the similarities and differences in Reba’s and his own experiences.

“What did you do, when you saw Hannibal for who he was?”

She asked, but they both knew the answer.

“Exactly what I’m doing now, I opened my mind and made a home for him next to my own monsters.”

“You welcomed him with open arms.”

Will closed his eyes, taking a deep breath before relaxing his shoulders, deceptively calm. “And it came with a price, paid in blood.” He looked up at her, a part of his decision clearly showing in his expression when she took a small step back. “If I play, I pay.”

“Killing me won’t be the same as what you’ve attempted previously. It won’t feel the same.” Molly wasn’t trying to save herself. When Will looked at her, all he saw was someone trying their best to save him from himself.

“I find that at the end of the day, everyone dies the same. I think the only death that would feel different to me, would be Hannibal’s.”

“Because to take his life, is to kill yourself,” Molly murmured, her lips thin and shoulders hunched in resignation. “And suicide is the enemy.”

Will’s smile was sad, and it was mirrored in the understanding in Molly’s eyes. “I’m sorry Molly, I truly am.”

He stepped closer to her, and she held her head high, dignified and regal even as her gaze grew flinty. Her wings were held tight against her back, the only indication of her discomfort. Will wasn’t sure if she could feel fear, but he was willing to find out. Even knowing his decision, she still spoke out against it. “I hope for both our sakes this choice is one you will not regret.”

“I can’t regret it,” Will stretched a hand out, stepping around her wings before folding her in his embrace, an arm around her waist and one resting on a wing. Her back was to his chest, and with her pure white wings spread out on either side of him, the moment felt surreal. He leaned into her, one hand fisted around a long feather, and tugged at it in a way that made her flinch in pain. “You won’t fight me?”

“Do you want me to fight you?” She asked, slow and measured, but Will could hear the implied question behind her words.

Would it make a difference to him if she fought? Could Will excuse this as self defense if she tried to harm him first?

The answer was obvious now that he’s seen what Hannibal knew all along, that he was something outside of the realm of humanity, and his compassion was selective.

“No,” Will whispered as he rested his chin on her shoulder, a mimicry of comfort and affection. She turned her head towards his and he was close enough to feel the way her breath hitched, a puff of warm air over his own lips as he held her captive.

She didn’t speak for a long moment, and let out a quiet shudder when Will pulled a white feather out of her wing. He held the sharp cartilage tip to her throat, and Will closed his eyes as he remembered fragments of dreams, of another girl that had meant so much to him and bled out in his arms.

This wasn’t Abigail, but this sacrifice held the same amount of pain for him.

“It won’t matter Will,” Molly shook her head, and his fingers twitched as her blonde hair fell in a halo around her face, hiding her expression from him. “You can kill me and you can go to him, but you have wings now, and as long as you have them, you will always have a way to come back to Heaven.”

She paused, leaning her head back and baring her throat, eyes closed. She looked almost peaceful, a small smile playing on her lips. He couldn’t tell if it was because she truly believed she had given him a chance to escape Hannibal’s hold, or if she thought they had won by forcing his hand. That perhaps he would realize the error of his ways if he killed an innocent. “It will give you a way out, and as long as you have that, Hannibal’s leash will only extend so far.”

With one last deep breath, Will twisted his hand. The first splashes of blood flowed out of her neck, and Will gasped as a cloud of red-tinted mist burst out, a substance that seemed almost wispy and incorporeal.

She choked on the blood, a harsh gurgle as she collapsed onto her knees. Some of the ‘blood’ seemed to evaporate instantly as it met the air, red mist rising up like steam around her. He let her go before stepping back, watching as she fell on her back. The red spread and covered her once white wings, wisps of it pouring out from between her feathers and dissipating in the air. The remaining blood spread on the grass around her, and Will couldn’t help but see the Dragon’s wings over hers, both sacrifices to the altar of his and Hannibal’s devotion. He pressed his shaking hand to his mouth, and his eyes closed as he smeared her blood on his face. He flicked his tongue out onto his lips in a daze, and shuddered at the pungent taste of iron and something so pure it hurt to breathe in.

Will crouched down next to her head, conflicted as he saw her choke, her hand coming up to press against her neck and blood bubbled out of the corner of her lips. He pressed a thumb to the small trail of blood on her cheek, and smeared it. “You bleed the same,” Will murmured, a morbid curiosity filling him as his wings flared out, triumphant and tingling with the joy of a kill.

The shadow of his wings over her bloodied form reminded him of her last words, and he smiled down at her, one that was almost cruel in its intensity. She stared back up at him, tears flowing out of the corner of her eyes. “I don’t need a way out, Molly,” He leaned over, hands pressing into the bloodied grass with a wet squelch. “A majority of my relationship with Hannibal has been one of hesitance. But with this…”

Will trailed off, eyes tracking the slowing gasps that fell from Molly’s lips, her wings now soaked almost black from the amount of blood staining them. Will carefully placed the feather he’d used to slit her throat on her chest, his hand laying there for a long moment. He stared down at his hand, the glint of dull metal catching his eyes. The wedding ring was still there, shining weakly in the light and covered by Molly’s blood. Carefully, he slid it off his finger, and without a word, placed it on top of the feather he’d wounded her with.

It was almost a relief to be free of this tangible reminder of his past. Now, he only had Hannibal.

He reached behind him and held onto a bunch of his feathers. With meticulous determination, he clenched his jaw and ripped them out. Molly watched on in horror, and he couldn’t help the perverse glee he felt knowing he was denying them what they wanted.

All his life had been spent being manipulated and coerced under the guise of good intentions. This was just another one of them. His choice was Hannibal, and it would always be Hannibal. The wings were nothing but an obstacle now.

Will let out a hiss between clenched teeth, an occasional grunt of pain falling out as he ripped and clawed at his wings until they were nothing but a bloodied echo of what they had been. He looked over his shoulder and pressed his lips into a thin line when he saw he’d ripped the feathers down to the bone, and that the thin membrane which had held his feathers was torn and had holes in some places. He tried to stretch his wings and whimpered when they barely twitched. They were patchy and though there was still a fair amount of feathers left, he knew that the flight feathers he’d mutilated would leave him grounded, for better or for worse.

The amount of pain he was in made him pant, and he looked down to meet empty eyes. Molly was gone, her mouth still hanging slightly open in horror as she stared up at the blue sky. Her last vision had been of him mutilating his own wings, and he hoped that with this, there would be no question of where his loyalties lie.

Even with his limited knowledge on wings, he knew there was no going back from this. It was unlikely they would ever heal enough for him to fly, and that was what he wanted.

Standing up slowly, and towering over her body, he felt powerful. He tipped his head back, the persistent ache in his wings now spreading down his back and up his neck. Pulses of agony that made him feel so very alive.

“I don’t think Hannibal has a leash on me.” Will murmured, eyes closed as he spoke. “I think that this is a collar of my own making. We are anchored to each other, our influence the only waves rocking our existence, and no amount of second guessing will change that."

He stared down at her, and after a brief moment of hesitation, bent over and picked up the bloody white feather. He touched his fingertip to the sharp cartilage, and marveled at the drop of blood that welled up on his finger at the light touch. "I will never be free from him, and if I have any say in it, I never will."

Will stepped towards the door, his fingers smearing Molly's blood into the doorknob. It flared bright for a moment before settling and the door opened with an easy click when he turned it. He looked back one last time. Molly almost looked peaceful, wings spread wide and hands resting lightly on her stomach, as if this was just a nightmare that she could wake from.

Slowly, too slow for him to notice at first, the blood disappeared into the ground and flowers started growing around Molly. They were bright yellow daisies, ones that matched the color of her hair and cradled her empty body. They wove through her wings, covering every trace of blood with green stems and bright flowers. Finally, after all the blood was gone, the flowers stopped growing.

Will watched it happen with a sense of awe and when he spoke, it was a quiet whisper, not one filled with regret but rather a sense of appreciation for the sacrifice she'd made. She was representative of the last bit of good he'd possessed, but Hannibal had a tighter grip on his heart, and he'd made his choice. Hannibal was worth every drop of blood that tainted his skin.

This time, it was Will's turn to fall for Hannibal in every way.

"Goodbye, Molly."

Hannibal remembered fear.

He hadn't felt it in years, not since his sister died in his arms and the only warmth he'd felt was the fullness of his stomach as he'd consumed her. Through consumption, he was reborn.

He ate her because he loved her, and he loved her enough to keep her with him forever, a piece of her giving life to his empty existence.

Fueled by love, he'd found the perpetrators, and killed them just as savagely as they'd treated his family. When it was over, he'd expected a sense of triumph, or perhaps euphoria from avenging his loved ones.

Instead, all he felt was a numb tiredness, a surety that his continued existence would be one filled with strife and that no amount of feeding would fill the hole in his heart. He killed because it amused him, and he kept people far from his heart.

And then he met Will Graham.

Will, with his understanding. Dear Will with his prickly facade and thin veneer of morality. In him, Hannibal had found a monster he could keep, and one who would know him perhaps more than he knew himself.

He hadn't felt fear in years, but standing in front of Mischa, he felt it just like he did back then, a small child bathed in blood with tear tracks down his face. The adrenaline of his first kill, and the emptiness that had consumed him. All of those emotions welled up in him, and Hannibal barely registered Abigail's nails digging into his arm in warning as he took a halting step forward.

She looked just as he'd remembered, a little girl with a bright smile and hair the color of sunlight. Her eyes sparkled mischievously and she was wearing her favorite sundress, the one that she'd constantly dirtied when they had run through the woods to play together. It was always Hannibal that carried her back, a hand petting the mud-stained dress as she dozed against his shoulder. It was Hannibal that would change her into her pajamas, and press a gentle kiss to her forehead before taking the dress and washing it by hand.

She had been his charge, and he had failed her.

"It can't be…mylima…" His voice was a hoarse croak, the tears in his eyes threatening to fall.

"Hanni," Her voice was sweet, light and playful as it'd always been. "I've missed you."

"Hannibal," Abigail's voice was a hiss, fingers tight against his arm and body trembling. He realized distantly that she was afraid, and he tried to school his expression into one of neutrality, frowning when it was harder than he anticipated. His defenses were down, and he felt raw, as if he'd been laid bare by his past. "What's going on?"

"This is Mischa," Hannibal turned his face towards Abigail, giving her a soft smile to try and assuage the tension holding her stiff. "My sister."

"Your sister," Abigail repeated blankly, a trace of disbelief in her tone. She loosened her grip on Hannibal and shot a wary glance at the little girl. Mischa had her hands clasped behind her back, and was rocking back and forth on the balls of her feet. Flanking her on the left and right were two guards, both holding spears and clearly on high alert as they sized up Hannibal and Abigail. “I thought she’d died years ago.”

Hannibal had told Abigail enough that she knew this was suspicious, just as Hannibal did. He knew it didn’t make sense, and it was likely this wasn’t his sister but it was hard to be rational in the face of unburied memories.

Mischa’s eyes cut over to Abigail, and Hannibal stepped in front of her to shield her from Mischa’s gaze, unsure if he’d imagined the cold look she’d shot Abigail.

“I see you’ve replaced me.”

“Mischa,” Hannibal paused, licking his lips as he tried to gather his words. “You’re not someone I can replace.”

Mischa’s cheerful face dissolved into one of careful consideration, the expression foreign on the face of a child. She tilted her head, and Hannibal saw the cruelty in them. “That might be true. But you’re here for a reason. Will you kill me again, Hannibal?” Her question was mocking, though she kept her tone light and childlike.

“I didn’t kill you.” Hannibal clenched his hands into fists, tense at his side as he took in a deep breath through his nose. The accusation hit him with guilt he didn’t know he’d harbored, even after all these years. It was fascinating to him, that he was still capable of guilt.

Mischa’s eyes narrowed, and it unsettled Hannibal. He noticed the two guards at the door inching closer, and though his back was to them, he was quite aware that they would soon be an issue. “No, you did something much worse than that. However, that is in the past. All is forgiven now.”

Mischa stepped closer, and Hannibal couldn’t help stooping down, the motions unfamiliar yet habitual at the same time. He’d grown taller, but she was still the same size she’d always been, and it tugged at the core of him to lean in close, allowing her to place a small hand against his face. He turned his head, inhaling deeply and smelling the fragrance that haunted his nightmares, the scent of her shampoo and the natural smell of his little sister.

He clenched his eyes shut and when he opened them, he let out a shaky breath.

“Oh, Hanni,” Mischa sighed, cradling his face in both her hands as she leaned her forehead against his. “Stay by my side and we can be a family again. Isn’t that what you’ve always wanted?”

Hannibal stared into her eyes, the color one he saw whenever he looked into a mirror. In the beginning it had hurt, but over time, his eyes reminded him of her in a way that he could live with. When it crinkled at the edges, he remembered her childish laughter, and the happiness on her face. When they were sadder, heavy with emotions, he remembered the tantrums she used to throw and the quiet she’d fall into when she was upset.

He would always have a piece of her with him, but this was an opportunity for more than just a taste of what he wanted. This was a rebirth.

“Hannibal.”

Abigail’s tense voice pulled him out of his stupor, and he realized quickly that the guards were now surrounding them, spears pointed in a threatening manner. Hannibal straightened up, heart heavy as he took on the uncharacteristic look of triumph on Mischa’s face.

It felt dissonant, like a mask that didn’t fit right, and as Hannibal held onto Abigail’s hand, he knew that what the Devil had proposed wasn’t sustainable. He could fool himself for only so long before this poor imitation of Mischa would rankle his nerves, and he would end up disposing of her.

It was better to get it over with now, no matter how much it pained him.

He remembered Will’s warning then, and it filled him with a calm as Will’s voice sounded through his head. This wasn’t what he had expected, but nevertheless, it was an obstacle.

For a short moment he allowed himself to grieve, to close his eyes and imagine his existence here with this echo of Mischa. Maybe over time it wouldn’t have been enough, but the image in his head was almost painful with how much it filled Hannibal with yearning. He would have Abigail and Will with him, both of them enjoying the food he’d made as he smiled at Mischa, his dear sister a part of his life again.

The image shattered, and he knew that the love for the family he’d made for himself, would guide his hand.

“Oh Mischa,” Hannibal breathed out, touch gentle on her soft cheeks as he caressed her face. He let go of Abigail’s hand even as she clawed at him, reluctant to release him. He clasped Mischa in his palms, just as she had done to him. “I do adore you.”

Hannibal quirked his lips up, and he pulled her towards him. The Devil was smiling, and he knew that she thought she had won. When he smiled back, it was sad, and with a quick snap of his wrists her eyes widened in shock, mouth falling open before going limp in his arms.

He cradled her in his arms, her neck broken and head lolling at an unnatural angle. He kept his eyes closed as he gave himself a moment to breathe. Behind him, he heard Abigail’s grunts as she fought the guards, protecting his back. Despite the despair he felt, he felt light knowing that his chosen family would protect him.

He picked up her body before facing the two guards in front of him. They looked terrified, spears pointed towards him with a wild look in their eyes. He glanced behind him, and saw Abigail panting as she watched the other two guards carefully, her back to him as she stayed in place with a stubborn determination.

Before any of the guards could attack, Hannibal spoke up.

“Enough.”

His voice was cold, and they froze, glancing at each other hesitantly.

“I do not have time for any obstinate behavior. Either submit, or suffer the same fate.” Hannibal glanced down at the Devil’s limp body, and back up with a raised brow. “Well?”

There was a pause before their spears clattered to the floor. Almost in unison, they kneeled, and Hannibal grinned viciously as they trembled before him.

“Perfect. It would be foolish to fight a losing battle. Come, Abigail.” Hannibal gestured with his head, and after a short glance at the other two demons now kneeling at her feet, she sheathed her dagger and followed after him, keeping a wary eye on the four guards unmoving in the foyer.

“Wh-what are you going to do with her?”

One of the demons dared to speak up, and Hannibal didn’t take offense to it, in fact he relished the opportunity to broadcast his intentions.

“I imagine the dishes I can make out of her will be splendid indeed, and I have a guest arriving soon. I suggest you spread the word and let the rest of the castle know that they can stay here and serve us, or die trying to fight. Choose wisely.” He absorbed the pale looks on their faces, and turned on his heel. He had knowledge of the basic structures of castles such as this one. His childhood home had been one, after all, and it didn’t take him long to find the kitchen.

He placed the Devil’s body on the long table in the center, gratified to see the kitchen was empty of demons. Likely, they had heard the commotion and would soon be leaving or staying as servants to Hannibal’s reign. Although, his vision of the future included Will ruling by his side, cruel and bloodied and their daughter Abigail smiling beside them.

“Are you alright?”

The question was tentative, and Hannibal placed his palms against the edge of the table, leaning into it as he sighed. He smiled before meeting Abigail’s eyes across the table, her gaze steadfastly avoiding the dead girl on the table. It likely brought up memories of the girls she’d gutted with her father.

“You do not need to worry about me, Abigail. I am as well as I can be.”

Abigail nodded, her eyes glancing off to the side as she chewed on her bottom lip. “It must have been hard.”

Hannibal deliberated for a moment before reaching across the space and placing a gentle hand on her shoulder. She met his eyes, blue gaze filled with a worry that he was gratified to see. In the beginning of their journey together, she had followed him out of necessity, but it seemed that time had allowed them to rekindle their familial bond, and he wasn’t going to waste this second chance he’d been given.

“It was,” Hannibal murmured, glancing at Mischa’s body, her face haloed by golden hair. “But it was necessary. I would do this, and more, if it meant securing a place for us in this world.”

“For Will.” Abigail corrected weakly, and there was enough of a lilt to it that Hannibal knew it was a question, one tinged with insecurity.

“No Abigail,” Hannibal shook his head, eyes crinkling in fond regard as he took in the way she brightened up at his words. “For our family. The teacup has come back together, and this time it will never break.”

Abigail smiled, and it was soft, tentative but with true happiness shining in her eyes. “I hope so.”

“I do too.”

Hannibal let the moment sink in and relished in the repaired bond between them. It had taken a while, and more than a few deaths, but now they were here and Hannibal would finally have the family he’d always wanted.

“Now,” Hannibal cleared his throat before dragging his fingers down and taking hold of her hand. He took a knife out of the knife block next to him with practiced ease. He placed the blade, handle first, into her palm and smiled when she wrapped her fingers around it, accepting her role. He looked into her eyes and they were a clear, steady blue with none of the dissociation she’d wrapped herself in like a security blanket, when she’d been with her father. She wasn’t running away now, nor was she trying to deny her part in this, and it made Hannibal smile with pride. “Let’s prepare a devilish feast.”

Chapter End Notes

And that's it my friends, the next chapter will be the epilogue so it will be a very short chapter. HOWEVER, stay tuned for the post main story piece which will be a one shot of Hannibal bathing Will and taking care of Will's wounds/wings included as part of the series <3333 The last chapter ends at a really good spot so I did not want to interrupt it. But yes!! There will be some fluffy times they deserve it. (Don't worry I will give you readers after care after dragging you with me on this journey haha). Also low key I wanted to end this series on chapter 13 because....hehehe 13 is an unlucky number and Hell you know??? xD

I forgot to mention: I had debated making a battle scene but I realized it would not fit the overall tone of the fic. I hope it was still enjoyable despite the lack of solid action haha.

Did I groan out loud when Hannibal ended with that stupid pun??? Did I leave it in there anyways because Hannibal would kill me for cutting it out??? Yes, I have no control over their actions T_T. As always, if you enjoyed please let me know! I adore all your comments <3

You can find this lovely graphic by Dragon here on tumblr or retweet it here on Twitter.

For those who missed it WE ARE PRINTING THIS AS A HANNIGRAM BOOK which you can buy. This is NOT for profit and is just something we're offering for those interested. You can find the FAQ in chapters 10, 11 or 13.

If you wish to contact me regarding the printing of the fic or the fic itself, you can find my tumblr here. I'm also active on Twitter!

A New Beginning

Chapter Notes

This is the end, my friends. Thank you for coming with us on this hellish journey. I hope you will enjoy this conclusion.

One last time for the road: Thank you to Nicks for editing this whole thing and keeping up consistently with our schedule!! You've done so much for this fic, I can never say enough but thank you!!

And of course, my bestie, the ever amazing jdragon122 who made banners for EVERY single chapter as well as the final art piece (we stayed up till late last night working on it but at least it wasn't as bad as the title art piece where we stayed up till 4-5 am haha) is a true joy to work with and just an incredible artist in general. Thank you so much for agreeing to this project and working on it together!! This is truly our baby x'D

You can find the final art piece by Dragon here on tumblr or retweet it here on Twitter. Please do check it out they worked SO hard on it and it is stunning <3 Let them know how much you love it ^-^ To reblog the post with all the chapter banners as well as the title art piece you can find it here on tumblr.

And without further ado, please enjoy this epilogue.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

A New Beginning
“And what do you think I’ll taste like?”
“Like salvation.”

Will groaned as he tried to use a hand to rub at his stubble. His skin tugged painfully as the dried blood flaked off of his hand and sprinkled his already dirty face. He carefully opened his eyes and stiffened for a moment, taking in the red-hued sky and the feeling of dry dirt against his back, the press of pebbles sensitive against his injured wings.

He sat up, clamping down a scream of pain as his aching wings peeled themselves off the ground where his blood had fused them with the dirt underneath. He stood up and dusted himself off, though if it made no difference in the long run. He was covered in blood and dirt.

Will quickly patted his waistband, relief filling him when the sharp sting of the feather he'd used to kill Molly pressed against his skin. He tried not to think too hard about why he'd kept it, but if he was being honest with himself it was meant to be a gift to Hannibal. A way of showing his devotion through death and sacrifice. He was sure Hannibal would appreciate the gesture even if he was hesitant on the details of how'd he'd present it to the man.

Looking around, he realized that there were people moving around him. They seemed agitated, and many had bags clearly meant for travel as they exited the large castle before him. Will frowned and stopped one of them.

"Excuse me, what's going on?"

The woman grimaced, eyes darting to the castle and her grip tightening on her pack as she spoke. "The Devil has been killed. There's a new ruler now, and he gave us an ultimatum. Leave or serve him, and many of us have chosen to leave," She glanced up at him, taking in his bloodied and tattered wings with wide eyes. "It would be wise for you to leave while you can. You seem like the sort he'd be interested in cutting open for fun."

Will didn't respond back, only giving her a nod of thanks before moving against the flow of the people. She wasn't wrong, Will was exactly the kind that interested the cruel man they were running from. Except, instead of running, he was going to stay.

He followed the path until the wide castle doors were within his sights. There in the center of the doorway, framed by lines of people filing out of the castle and giving him a wide berth, was Hannibal.

Will's mouth felt dry, his heart pounding as he placed one foot in front of the other, eyes never leaving Hannibal's hungry gaze as he closed the distance between them. He walked until they were within breathing distance, close enough to see the flecks of stubble on Hannibal's cheeks.

Will opened his mouth, a shaking hand coming up to cover up a sob that threatened to fall out. He froze when Hannibal cupped his face, nails scratching in a possessive motion against the side of his face, fingers tracing the scar he'd received from the Dragon.

"Oh, my beautiful, darling boy," Hannibal murmured, leaning in until he could nose at the trails of blood streaking Will's chin. He tipped Will's head back breathing in the scent of iron on Will's neck, tongue flicking out to lick up a dried patch. His voice was barely a whisper as he spoke, hoarse with want. "How did she taste?"

If it wasn't because of the fact that Will was hyper aware of Hannibal, he would have missed the question. The hustle and bustle of the demons leaving the castle flowed around them in a cacophony of sound. As it was, he pulled away until he could meet Hannibal's eyes, his expression serious as he replied in the only way he could.

"She tasted like forgiveness."

And she did. She had been the sacrifice that Will laid at Hannibal's feet. A way of elevating him to an equal in Hannibal's eyes. Hannibal had killed and done much worse so he could claim Will, and now, Will had killed someone he genuinely cared for so he could reach Hannibal.

She had been an innocent, and Will felt nothing but powerful as he laid himself bare in front of Hannibal's eyes.

"You never cease to amaze me, Will." Hannibal smiled, his sharp fangs glinting in the light. Hannibal slid his fingers through Will's hair, petting gently before tracing his touch to Will's mangled wings. He frowned when Will flinched, the light touch painful against his wounds. "Was this a product of your fight with Molly?"

"No," Will shook his head, pressing close until he could rest his forehead against Hannibal's shoulder, suddenly feeling weary. He'd had a long journey and all he wanted was to sink into Hannibal's embrace. He gripped Hannibal's suit with his hands, drunk on the scent of him. "I did this."

"Why would you mutilate yourself like this?" Hannibal sounded curious, with a trace of worry as he pressed his lips to Will's matted curls.

Will shrugged, letting out a low whine when the movement jostled his wings. "I-it was the only way to make sure I would never be dragged back to Heaven," Will leaned away just enough to meet Hannibal's eyes, his lips pulled back into a snarl and grip tight on Hannibal's suit jacket, a hint of desperation in his words. "I couldn't risk it. Without functioning wings, they'll never be able to take me back."

Will looked down at the jacket, refusing to meet Hannibal's eyes as he continued, his voice a strained whisper. "And it would also cut off any possibility of me leaving you. I can't have you doubting me Hannibal. If we want this to work, there can be no room for hesitation."

Hannibal had almost stopped breathing throughout Will's explanation, and now his heart pounded double time as he hugged Will with a fierce passion, careful to avoid his wings. He buried his face into Will's curls, squeezing his eyes shut and allowing the tears he'd held back to fall down his face. Baptizing Will with his joy. "Dear Will, you make me feel weak when I should be powerful, and you fill me with power when I am weakest."

Will stiffened against him, and tried to pull away but Hannibal held him close. "Is that a bad thing?" His question was wary, and Hannibal chuckled before pressing more kisses into Will's hair, unable to hold back his affection.

"Oh Will, you are exactly what I need."

With one last kiss, Hannibal pulled back reluctantly. “Follow me. I’ll give you a tour of the grounds later, but I suspect you will want to eat.”

Will squinted at Hannibal’s back, taking in his infectious happiness even as his tired mind tried to keep up. “I want to see Abigail.”

As if summoned by his words, Abigail rounded the corner followed by three dogs. Will blinked, overwhelmed by the sight as Abigail stopped in her tracks. She stared at him wide-eyed for a long moment before running towards him and almost tackling him with an enthusiastic hug.

“Will! You’re finally here.” Abigail pulled back, and Will couldn’t help the way his eyes darted over her face then her neck, memories choking him up.

“Abigail, I’m so happy you’re okay.” Will replied, a smile on his face as he took in her relaxed posture and the casual confidence she seemed to have gained. He knew that it was likely a product of Hannibal’s teachings, no doubt their journey together had given her a measure of lethality.

“As okay as I can be,” Abigail shrugged before her eyes darted to Hannibal for a brief moment, her lips tugging up into a playful smirk. “Well, I’ll leave you two to it. I’m gonna go train the dogs for a bit.”

“Oh.” Will frowned, disappointed that she wasn’t joining them for dinner. He crouched down to pet the dogs, delighting in their soft black fur. They seemed friendly enough, though their eyes glowed an eerie red. “Who’s dogs are these?”

“We think they’re Hellhounds of some sort. They don’t seem normal,” Abigail explained, meeting Hannibal’s amused gaze as he watched their reunion. “But once we train them up and get them used to us they’ll be useful for hunts.”

Will straightened back up, an eyebrow raised. “I don’t think I like the idea of you hunting.”

Abigail rolled her eyes before giving a sharp whistle, the dogs wagging their tails as they followed her obediently. “Come on Will, I’m not a child anymore, and I’m sure Hannibal would object to your mothering.”

“I’m not-“ Will flustered, a hand running down his face as he shot a glare at Hannibal, clearly asking for backup that the smirking man wasn’t going to give him. Will sighed, flushing at the implications of her comment. “We’ll discuss this later. You won’t be joining us for dinner?”

Abigail smiled, a glint in her eyes that told Will she knew she’d already won the argument. Her smile quickly grew into a smirk at his question. “I already ate and it would be awkward being the third wheel to your romantic dinner. Have fun with Hannibal!”

She ran off with the dogs before Will could fully process her words and say anything back. There was a long silence, and even though Will wasn’t looking at him, he knew Hannibal was radiating smug satisfaction. He struggled for a moment longer before deflating, taking

Hannibal's hand and resolutely staring ahead of him. "Come on, take me to the dining room."

Hannibal squeezed his hand before leading him to the room, a smile on Hannibal's lips that made Will bite his bottom lip and helplessly smile back. He glanced over at Hannibal, taking in his form-fitting black suit, decorated in swirls of purple that glinted in the dim candlelight of the castle halls. It made him look regal as well as deadly, and Will took a moment to glance down at his own bloodied clothes and felt self-conscious.

As if sensing his thoughts, Hannibal tugged him close until their arms were pressed together where they held hands. "After we took the castle, Abigail and I had the time to freshen up in preparation for our reunion."

"Should I…?" Will trailed off, gesturing at himself in all his dusty glory.

"It is of no concern to me," Hannibal's eyes crinkled with mirth, his lips quirking to one side. "I do not mind what form you come to me in, just that you are well and whole."

Will squeezed their hands once before glancing to the side, neck warm with pleasure. "I am as whole as I can be, now that I am here with you."

For once, Hannibal seemed to be struck speechless. Instead of replying with words, Hannibal lifted Will's hand up, dirt and blood and all, and pressed a gentle kiss to the back of it. They made their journey to the dining room that way, hands clasped and radiating a soft pleasure.

Once they were seated, Hannibal started bringing out the dishes, introducing each one with a flourish until the table was laden with dishes of every style that matched the skull and blood red pomegranate decorations Hannibal had laid out. Silhouetted by the flickering fireplace, and sitting in an ornate dining room with a lavish meal laid before them, they looked the part of two sinners enjoying a forbidden feast.

Will cut a thin slice of the meat on the first dish before bringing it to his mouth, knowing full well who, or rather what he was eating as he chewed.

"To consume the Devil is to assume their place in this realm. Together with Abigail, we'll take the Devil's flesh unto ourselves, and rule forevermore." Hannibal raised his glass of wine, licking his lips as he watched Will eat with great satisfaction.

Will let out a considering hum, staring at the piece of meat speared on his fork for a long moment before placing it in his mouth and chewing. "To the Devil his due," Will murmured before he glanced at Hannibal with some curiosity. "I hope the Devil didn't give you too much trouble."

There was a slight pause in Hannibal's movements as he sliced the meat and brought it to his lips. Will watched, concern growing as he noticed the way Hannibal wouldn't meet his eyes. Hannibal chewed slowly, clearly taking the time to formulate a response before swallowing and speaking. "The Devil wore Mischa's face."

Will stiffened, mouth falling open as his hands clenched around the silver cutlery. He looked down at the meat before glancing back up, brows furrowed. “Hannibal…”

Hannibal took a deep breath before shooting Will a smile. “It is alright Will, it was not what I expected but I disposed of this obstacle efficiently.”

“That’s not-“ Will sighed, realizing Hannibal thought Will was worried for all the wrong reasons. He never doubted Hannibal would choose him, he just didn’t want Hannibal to suffer if he could avoid it. “I just want to make sure you were okay with that decision. She was your sister.”

Hannibal blinked at him, perhaps stunned by Will’s consideration before staring down at his plate. “I’m quite alright Will. As I said before, there is nothing I wouldn’t do for you and our family.”

Will cleared his throat, looking down at his plate. “You said before that you made a place for us. For me and Abigail.”

Hannibal was quiet for a long moment, not tense but rather a peaceful sort of acceptance of past betrayals. “That was what I promised, yes,” Hannibal said softly, a small smile on his lips.

Will didn’t know what to say, so he did the only thing he could. He leaned across the table, cupping Hannibal’s face in his hand as he stared into the eyes of the monster that held his heart and his sanity. “You’ve given more than enough, and this time, I’ll see to it that you get exactly what you deserve.”

“And what is it that I deserve, Will?” Hannibal murmured, eyes half lidded and heavy as he licked his lips.

Will closed his eyes, overwhelmed by emotions as he tried to formulate his thoughts. They’d quite literally defied Heaven and Hell to reach each other, and now that Will had Hannibal in his grasp, he didn’t know if he could keep the peace between them. Maybe he wouldn’t be able to save himself this time, and he would burn to ashes under Hannibal’s possessive passion. But maybe, that was just fine.

“You deserve a home. Someone to cradle your blackened soul and allow you into every crevice of their mind. You deserve a future, bloody and breathtaking in its intensity, a place for you to spread your art and take what you want,” Will took in a deep breath before leaning in, their lips almost brushing. “You deserve me, broken or whole, at your discretion, and I deserve you. I deserve a monster to call my own, and I’ve waited this long just to taste you, defied Heaven to stay by your side…”

“Oh?” Hannibal murmured, his gaze dark. They shined a deep red in the firelight, tears brimming at the edges as he raised a hand up to press Will’s palm harder against his face, wishing that he could brand Will’s every touch into his very being. To show everyone who he belonged to, and to do the same to Will. “And what do you think I’ll taste like?”

Will kissed him then, tears falling down his face, eyes fierce with triumph and a deep, all-consuming love. Their lips devoured each other, the kiss flavored with the metallic scent of blood and the saltiness of tears.

When Will pulled back, running a thumb against the spit-slick gape of Hannibal's mouth, breathing in Hannibal's every gasping exhale, he choked out-

"Like salvation."

Chapter End Notes

And that's it guys-

SIKE lol there will be a one shot with Hannibal grooming and bathing Will/Will's wings that shall be posted within the next few weeks in the series. If you would like to be notified please follow the "Hell is Where We Belong" series. There were a few loose ends here and there that I couldn't fit into the main storyline as the two murder husbands were SO focused on each other that they didn't give a shit about the overarching plot xD The one shot will almost be directly after their dinner and will be some of the SOFTEST fluffiest shit so hope you guys will stick around for that.

Regardless, the main story is now completed. Thank you for coming on this journey with me. If you guys enjoyed it please do leave us a comment. This has been a passion project for almost 2 years now and it has taken a lot of time and dedication to get it out. In terms of my future hannigram projects, I do have one more fic left in me for my Seasons collaboration with Lin. If you would like to read more hannigram from me, do let me know and I shall try my best to work on more hannigram!

I wanted to also take this time to give a special shoutout to our two faithful supporters matildaparacosm and ms_naddie. Thank you for taking the time to comment on every chapter, it really made me and Dragon so indescribably happy and it was something for us to look forward to. (Also shoutout to 3490 who always leaves some long ass comments that make my heart soar). Comments and kudos are the lifeblood of writers, and it is what keeps us going so the support is much appreciated. Of course, every single one of you readers who left a comment and kudos is precious to us, so thank you SO SO much.

For those who missed it WE ARE PRINTING THIS AS A HANNIGRAM BOOK. This is NOT for profit and is just something we're offering for those interested.

If you're interested in getting this fic as a printed Hannigram book, please check out this FAQ which has all the necessary information. The interest form in the FAQ will close on 9/30/20 12 am PST.

And with that, thank you for your time and hope to see you again! You can find my tumblr here. I'm also active on Twitter and my Twitter is only hannigram!

Please drop by the Archive and comment to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!